



Little Guideposts
in
The Way to Life
Pell





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Little Guideposts
in the Way to Life

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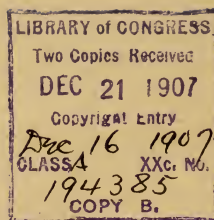
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Foreward



HAVE called these little talks on everyday problems guideposts, not because I regard them as infallible guides, but rather the reverse; for I once found in the course of a long journey in the mountains, that guideposts are not more reliable than the people who make them, and should not be taken without such grains of allowance as the traveler's instinct may suggest. I can only feel sure that none of those which I have set up in this little volume will be found turned entirely around and pointing in an opposite direction, like some of those I found on my mountain journey; and I am hopeful that if the reader will take them as I learned to take my mountain guides he will come out—as I did—all right in the end.

The One Sure Guide



THE world has always wanted to know more about God. From the beginning men have looked up at the stars at night and wished that God would in some way reveal himself. We have always felt that if we could once look upon him all our questions would be answered, all our darkness dispelled, all our longings satisfied. And we have never ceased to search for God. We have sought him in the stars, and in the flowers, and in the winds, and in the sea, and in the far-off mountains. We have scoured the forest and the desert looking for traces of his footsteps. We have honey-

combed the earth looking for specimens of his handiwork. Yet, long ago, in the very midst of our search God came down into the world to satisfy our desire. And men looked into his face and went on their way to listen for him again in the voice of the sea. For Jesus in Galilee was God making himself known to men—the Invisible One come out of impenetrable darkness to show himself to human eyes. When men looked at the stars they thought they saw the wisdom of God; when they looked at the mountains they thought they saw the strength of God; when they looked upon the raging sea they thought they saw the anger of God; but when they looked upon Jesus they saw—God. They saw him—how many saw him and how few recognized him!

I do not wonder that those who did not recognize him should pass on and look for him elsewhere, but the mystery of mysteries to me is that anyone of us who have recognized him should pass on likewise. If you and I have recognized in Jesus the

image of God, why do we not stop and sit at his feet? Why do we not look to him to answer our questions? Why do we not look to him to dispel our darkness? Why do we not look to him to satisfy our longings?

II

Getting First Questions Settled



OW came I here? Whence came these things around me? Did I just happen? Did these things around me just happen? Then great is Chance. Then life is but a game, and I am gaming. Then there is no law and no lawgiver. I need to obey no one; there is no one who calls for my allegiance. Or, have I been evolved out of nothing—brought into being by some blind, unfeeling force? Then great is Nature. I will bow down to Nature. I will fear Nature. Thunders and lightnings and earthquakes and cold and heat will terrorize and enslave me.

But this world did not just happen. "God

created the heaven and the earth." And I was not evolved out of nothing. "God created man in his own image." What then? A man is wrecked on an unknown island. He climbs the nearest hill and carefully surveys the whole land, and there is no sign of life. It is fearfully lonesome but there is a little comfort in the reflection that at last he has reached a place where he can do as he pleases. And he proceeds to do as he pleases. He settles where he chooses, appropriates what he finds and does everything according to his own sweet will, and all goes well. One day a man-of-war anchors off the island and in half an hour he has learned that the place, which he has supposed belonged to nobody, is the property of the greatest sea power on earth, and that a pearl fishery is to be established upon it. What shall he do? If he is looking for trouble he can go on as he started following his own sweet will and refusing to recognize any other will whatsoever. But if he wants to continue on the island and to live a life of peace he knows that his only chance is

to subject his own will to the will of the owner of the island.

Most of us enter upon life in this world as we would enter upon life on an island upon which we had been wrecked. We look around us and, failing to see the owner of the land, take for granted that we have found a place where we can follow our own sweet wills, and we straightway proceed to do as we please. Pretty soon we run up against something. We never stop to find out what it is; we simply pick ourselves up and try again. Then we get another hard knock. And we keep on getting hard knocks. Some men go to their graves without ever knowing what "hit" them—as we say on the streets. Others go on until the hard knocks bring them to their senses and they discover to their amazement what a little child ought to have known, that all of their hard knocks have come from trying to push their way through this world without regard to the will of Him who made it and owns it. What a wonderful experience is that which

comes to a man when he resolves to stop trying to push his way across the mighty current of God's will and, accepting God's will as his own, throws himself upon the bosom of the great current, and allows himself to be carried without resistance in the direction God wants him to go! Here is the secret of a peaceful life—to realize that God owns this world in which we live and to act accordingly. If this world had been simply the product of chance then it would have belonged to nobody and I could have pursued my way through it according to my own will and pleasure, and without regard to any other will but my own. But it did not just happen; it was created, and all rights and title thereto have remained unto this moment in the hands of the Creator; and if I want to pursue my way through it in peace I must have regard for the will of its owner. I must obey the laws of the land.

But the Book from which I have learned that God made all things goes on to tell me that this God is infinitely wise and in-

finitely good; that he is infinitely holy and cannot look upon sin, and yet full of mercy for those who turn to him and repent and obey him. If this is true, then great is God. If he has my life in his hands, if he has all things which I need in his hands, then I will look to him; I will seek to know his will. It will be my highest ambition to obey his laws. I will worship him. I will fear only him. I will care nothing for chance. I will not be terrorized by nature. I will not tremble at anything. I will fear only God. And learning him I will learn to love him, and my fear shall be the reverence of a child for his father and not the fear of a slave for his master.

God created me. But this is not the last word. He created me "in his own image." Here is a truth to crack the brain-box. I know nothing else so overwhelming except the announcement of God's wonderful love for man. We cannot hope to understand all that it means, but one thing we can understand, and that is that if God made us in his own image we are in some

sense identified with him, our lives are in some way wrapped up in his life, our future in his future, and we are expected after some sort to live like him. If I had been made in the image of a brute all my interests would have been with brutes, and I would have been expected to live like a brute. But, being made in the image of God all my interests are with God, and I am expected to live like God.

It is in the very nature of things that every creature should live after his own order. Nature itself tells me that I do violence to myself when I refuse to live like God. Even brutal men know that every brutal thing a man does is contrary to his essential nature. It is not manlike. In other words, it is not godlike. If God had wanted me to be brutal he would have made me a brute, but he wanted me to be godlike and therefore he made me in his own image. And having made me in his own image he has a right to expect that I shall seek to live on his plane; to use the brain he has given me in think-

ing his thoughts; to use the will he has given me in the direction of his will; to love the things he loves and hate the things he hates; to identify myself with the things of his kingdom.

A great man passes from among us and the eyes of all the people are turned toward the only son who survives him. He is just the image of his father, everybody is saying. He has his father's manly form, his father's fine features, his father's winning smile, his father's brilliant talents. And the people are expecting, because he is the very image of his father, that he will walk in the footsteps of his father and do honor to his father's name. The world has a right to expect that of the son of a great man who is the image of his father. You and I were made in the image of our Father in heaven, and though the likeness is sadly marred yet all the universe looking down upon the world recognizes in us a likeness of our Father. And has not all the universe a right to expect that we, the only creatures made after the divine

image shall, in some measure at least, walk in our Father's footsteps and do honor to our Father's name?

But there is still another first question. What did God put me here for? Why did he not put me in Heaven? For one thing, he tells me, I am on earth to "subdue" it. God put me here to subdue the earth, not to be subdued by it. If this is true then I have no right to give way to the difficulties that surround me. I am not to be conquered by difficulties; I am to conquer. I am not to be the victim of circumstances; I am to be the victor. I have no right to say I can't. I have no right to play the weakling and whine because it is too cold or too hot, or lay down my hoe because the ground is too hard or the grass grows too fast. God did not put me here to go around the world with my fingers in my mouth. He put me here to conquer. Shall I conquer or shall I be conquered? Shall I blast the rock to get down to the treasures of life or shall I yield because the rock is in the way and blast my life?

Why does God want us to devote our lives to the work of subduing the world? Is it because he is so much concerned about the world? If I employ the best gardener in town to look after my garden it will be because I am concerned about my garden. I want to make the most of it. But if I put it in charge of my little son it will not be because I am concerned about my garden, but because I am concerned about my son. He may not do much for the garden but the garden will do a great deal for him. He may not raise many things but he will be greatly helped in his own raising. His little muscles will grow bigger every day. His eye will be trained to measure straight lines and curves. He will learn lessons in faith. He will learn to resist the temptation to dig up the seed to see if it has sprouted and to wait in faith for the sprout to shoot above the ground. He will learn lessons in patience while waiting for the plants to grow. He will learn lessons in perseverance trying to keep down the

grass. He will learn lessons of God's wonderful wisdom and providence and love as he goes down into the secrets of the plants and of the soil in which they grow. And if he is faithful that garden will make a man of him. And so God puts us here not because he is anxious to make the most of the earth which he has created, but because he wants to make the most of us, his children. He wants to see our little muscles grow bigger every day. He wants to see us learn lessons of faith, of patience, of perseverance, of love. He wants to see us grow up to be men. He wants to see us become God-like. If you and I are faithful in the work he has given us to do we may not accomplish very much for others but we will become men. That is, we will become like God.

III

The Rule of Life



HE Lord is thy life; therefore love him and obey him and thou shalt live, and it shall be well with thee."

"He is my life!" exclaimed a beautiful woman who had clung to a brute of a husband with a devotion which, to her friends, was inexplicable. "He is my life; I cannot live without him." And when he died she literally ceased to live, though she continued in a sort of dead existence for some weeks after he was gone. In an infinitely higher, stronger sense the Lord is your life; you cannot live without him. If you would have life

you must have the Lord, and the Lord must have you. You must throw yourself at his feet. You must set your heart on him. You must love him to adoration. You must worship him and him alone.

Man is a worshiping animal. He must worship something. If he does not set his heart on that which is good he will set his heart on that which is bad. The greatest tendency of our modern life is to idolatry. We are not often tempted to atheism, but we are continually tempted to worship some other God than Jehovah, and to depend upon some other means of learning the divine will than the means which God himself has provided. One man worships pleasure; another bows down to his own reason; another sacrifices himself to his ambition; and a multitude of us go down on both knees to the almighty dollar. It is so much easier to bow down to these things, which have their root in selfishness, than to worship the true God, which requires an utter renunciation of self. And we must bow

down to something. All the world is seething and burning with intense desire. It is a day when men do nothing by halves. If they welcome money as their god they jump into the very middle of the mad race for wealth. If it is pleasure they have no other thought. We need to have it rung into our ears every day we live, "Keep yourselves from idols." And we need to be reminded every day that there is but one way. Every heart has its throne; on every throne some god must sit. We do not allow our heart-thrones to be empty. If we would keep out of our hearts all idols we must enthrone the one true God. There is room for him, but when he is on the throne there is room for no more. It is impossible to worship God and Mammon. It is useless for us to say to-day that we will not allow ourselves to be carried away by the love of this or that or the other. The thing for us to say is that we will allow ourselves to be carried away with love for our God, and then when we love him as we ought there will be no dan-

ger; our hearts will be too full for idols.

God is my life—the source and provider and preserver of my life. If I would have life—not physical life merely, but spiritual life also—I must be vitally united to God as the branches are united to the vine. The more perfectly I am united with God the more abundant will my life be.

How can I maintain this vital connection with God? The answer is plain: By continuing to obey Him whom we have enthroned in our hearts. The most fruitful source of trouble in this life is disobedience. Nearly all the trouble that comes to us in childhood comes from disobedience. A disobedient child has no peace and he will not let anybody around him have any. Nearly all the trouble that comes to us in manhood or womanhood comes from disobedience. You disobeyed the laws of health yesterday and to-day you have a splitting headache. My neighbor disobeyed the laws of business yesterday and to-day he is ruined. That woman on the next block disobeyed the laws of so-

ciety and to-day she is in tears because her best friend shuns her. The man who hauls your coal disobeyed the laws of the land and to-day he is in the police court. Your son disobeyed the laws of physics and to-day he wears his arm in a sling. You broke one of God's commandments yesterday, and to-day your conscience will give you no rest. Why is it that disobedience is so destructive to our peace and happiness? Because it is an unequal conflict. When we disobey we enter into a struggle with a power that is stronger than we are. Law is a mighty current upon the bosom of which a man may float in perfect peace, but let him refuse to go with the current, and attempt to cross it, and he will find himself buffeting against a power which no human strength has ever overcome.

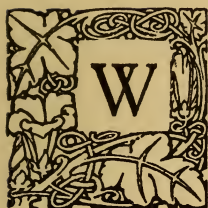
If we will obey God we shall have peace. If we will continue to obey him he will continue to rule in our hearts and lives and it shall be well with us. We need not stop to inquire how obeying and loving

God will secure that vital connection with God through which comes our life. We need not stop to argue that it is impossible to love and obey him unless we already have this vital connection with him. It is not a theory which we face, but a duty. Our part is not to discuss the theology of it, but to love God and keep his commandments. This is something that is within reach of us all. It is not above our reach or our comprehension. It is not something too mysterious to grasp. Every man who really desires in his heart to love God and keep his commandments can have that desire fulfilled whatever may be the height of his knowledge or the depth of his ignorance; for he whose heart reaches out after God may depend upon the strength of God himself. Let us not then stumble over the difficulties of our religion. The simple question for us to ask is, Do I love and obey God? If I have set my heart on God, and if I am honestly and continually striving to do his will, whatever may be my limitations and

weaknesses, I have life; and if I continue thus to strive, I shall have life more abundantly.

IV

The Secret of True Success



WE want to succeed in life. God wants us to succeed in life. He may not want me to succeed in all my undertakings but he wants my life to be a success. It is folly to imagine that any man can best glorify God by being a failure. He may not want us to have this or that particular thing which men are accustomed to identify with success—money, or social position, or freedom from misfortune—nevertheless he wants us to succeed in life; he does not want us to fail. He never calls a man or woman or child to be a failure.

When God called Joshua to the leadership of Israel he wanted him to succeed and pointed out to him the key to success. God wants us to succeed, and therefore he has given us this story of Joshua in which we may see the divine finger pointing to the key. "Where is it?" you ask; for the finger does not seem to point to anything which we have not seen before. Ah! there's the rub. It is not that the key is something new or strange, that we fail to recognize it; it is because it is so old and so simple. This secret of success, God tells us in this story, consists simply in accepting the work which he gives us to do, in going forward with courage to do that work, in continually studying his will as we go along, and in conforming to that will as fast as we learn it.

"This is all very well," you say, "but how may I know what God wants me to do? He told Joshua what he would have him do, but he does not tell me." Are you sure? If you will read the story again you will find that God simply pointed out

to Joshua the duty immediately before him. That was all. And that much God does for you and me. He called Joshua to a life of consecration to his service, and told him the first thing he wanted him to do. He calls us to a life of consecration to his service and tells us the first thing he wants us to do. And when we have done that he will tell us the next thing. If you and I are in the dark this moment as to the way God would have us go, we may be sure that it is because we have turned away from the duty immediately at hand. If we will always attend to the duty directly before us the next duty will be made plain to us. Suppose Joshua had ignored God's command to cross the Jordan and had sat down to unravel the problem of conquering Jericho; would God have given him any light on that point? The trouble with us is that instead of giving our strength to the duty immediately at hand, whether great or small, we consume our vitality in worrying over the darkness that shuts out the

duties ahead. God called Joshua to go over the Jordan. God calls a child to obey his mother. God calls you and me to be kind and helpful to a neighbor. It is utter folly for a child who neglects to obey his mother to complain that he does not know what God would have him do. It is utter folly for you and me who have left the kind word unspoken and the helpful deed undone to complain that God does not tell us what he wants us to do. The light that comes from heaven upon our pathway falls immediately in front of us. If we stand still the light will be immediately at our feet and all will be darkness beyond; if we go forward the light will go forward to light up the darkness for us.

This story tells us how the light comes. It is by continually studying to know the will of God, and doing that will as fast as we learn it. When a young Christian complains that he can find nothing to do for Christ, we may be sure that either he does not read his Bible, or he does not read it with the determination to do what

he finds commanded therein. The Bible is always suggesting something to do for Christ.

V.

Waiting For Orders



ONE of the hardest things you and I ever have to do is to wait for orders. There is nothing else, perhaps, that we do so poorly, or with so poor a grace, whether our waiting is upon God or man, and I do not wonder that the Bible lays so much stress upon it and gives us so many examples to show us how it should be done.

One of the best of these examples is the boy Samuel. Little Samuel "ministered unto the Lord" in the sanctuary. That is a high sounding word to use about the work of a little boy who did nothing but open

doors and sweep floors and carry messages and things for old Eli. But Samuel had been taught from the beginning that he was the Lord's, and everything he did he did for the Lord, and therefore he was just as truly a minister of the Lord as the grand high priest who stood before the altar. It was while he ministered unto the Lord that the Lord called him, and not while he was running away from duty or fretting because he was not given something better to do. I pause to remark that if any of us are looking for promotion from God or man we may rest assured that it will not come until we have learned to fill the positions we hold faithfully, efficiently and cheerfully. Neither God nor man ever calls one to a higher position who is running away from or crying over the work he already has.

But some one will say that Samuel was not at work when God called him. That is true; he was asleep; but he was asleep at his post and therefore in the eyes of God he was just as much a minister as if

he were awake. Let us not imagine that we cease to be in God's service the moment we cease to be active. The engineer on his locomotive is just as much in the service of the road while sitting perfectly still in his chair as he is when he is pulling out the throttle. There are times when the highest duty is to sit still and wait. But we must wait at the post of duty. The boy who is waiting to be a man so that he can do some great thing for God must not think that in the meantime he may run off "on a lark" because God has nothing for him to do. The girl who intends to be a useful Christian when she becomes a woman must not think that she can throw away the precious years of her girlhood in a whirl of dissipation because God has nothing for her to do.

But our interest in Samuel begins after he is wide awake. He had been told that the voice which he had heard was the voice of Jehovah himself; yet he went straight to his little bed and lay down again with no more fear in his heart than

if he had expected to hear the voice of his mother. And he waited; how many of us would have run away! We complain that God does not speak to us and tell us just what he would have us do, and yet how few of us are quite ready for him to speak to us just now! We would rather he would wait awhile, for we don't know just what he is going to say, and we fear that he may interfere with our plans. There is a piece of business we would like to get through with first, or a particular pleasure to which we have been looking forward which we want to enjoy; then we will be ready to listen; then we will be ready to do his bidding.

Samuel was not engaged in any questionable practices, nor was he looking forward to any unlawful pleasures. He had no secrets; he had no plans of his own which he would not have God interfere with; and therefore he went straight back to his place where God had called him, and lay down and listened. He lay there ready to hear God speak, though he didn't

know what God was going to say—ready to take God's orders, though he had no idea how hard a thing God would require of him. And when the call came it found him in the ideal attitude of a man before his Maker: "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." You will notice that there is no tremor in his voice. Most of us would have been frightened out of our wits. Are we not now when God calls us to some hard duty—to confess his name before men; to speak a word of warning in his name?

What was the secret of it all? What made it so easy for little Samuel to wait and listen and obey? The answer is in one word—consecration. Samuel had been dedicated to God from the beginning, and he knew it. He had grown up to regard himself as the Lord's own child. He never thought of himself as his own. He was God's and in God's service. He did not think of himself one moment as his own master and another moment as God's servant. He was not halting between two

opinions. The die was cast with him. He belonged to God, and therefore there was no struggle. As God's servant he had only to wait and listen and obey. If you and I could bring ourselves to feel that we are not our own—that we are bought with a price; if the die was really cast with us; if we regarded ourselves every moment as belonging entirely to God and separated from sin; if the struggle was all over and the point was finally settled—would it be a hard matter to wait upon God? Would it be hard to listen for orders? Would it be hard to obey when the orders came?

Another inspiring example is David. David had a right to exhort men to "wait on the Lord" for he never failed to practice his own preaching. He knew how to wait on the Lord. After his anointing at Bethlehem, instead of impatiently demanding his crown, he went quietly back to the field to care for his sheep. He would bide God's time. It was not an easy thing, we may be sure, to be patient in view of the way things were turning

out. To all human appearances it would have been better if he had never been anointed. Before that day he knew no trials save those which find their way into a peaceful shepherd's life; since then he had been exposed to the fury of a half-insane king, had been hunted like a wild beast, and had been compelled to seek refuge among the despised Philistines. But it is a long road that knows no turning, and now at last, when the long night was at its darkest, Saul, who for years had been pulling stones down upon his own head, was finally overwhelmed, and the first gray streak of dawn revealed the throne just ahead of the Lord's anointed.

One would suppose that the death of Saul would have been accepted by David as heaven's invitation to proclaim himself king over all Israel, and that without a moment's delay he would have set up his own throne. But David had found out in the course of his hard experience that there was Another who was as much interested in his life as he was himself, and

he had learned how to go to him for orders; and now though the way was apparently open, he would not move a step until he had inquired of the Lord.

The answer came promptly, "Go up." But it was not enough for one who felt as keenly as David did the need of divine direction in a great crisis. "Whither shall I go?" he asked. Choosing the seat of his government was not a small matter, and he wanted God to decide for him; he would not lean to his "own understanding."

And so he knew the whole meaning of waiting on the Lord. He could wait on the Lord for the working out of his plans, and he could wait on the Lord in prayer. But let us be sure that we understand this matter as David did. It did not occur to him that the way to wait for God to work out his plans was to sit down and hold his hands. It did not occur to him to leave his sheep and go fishing while waiting for the crown. And after he had gone up to Saul's court it did not occur to him that

his only business was to count the hours until he should be put in Saul's place. There he waited and worked, and he was so busy at his work that the people, watching him as he went in and out before them, were charmed with him. Nobody is ever charmed with a loafer.

Now and then a man in the midst of deep business trouble says to me, "Well I feel that somehow God is going to pull me through and I am going to sit down and let him do it." God will never pull us through anything if we do not do some pulling for ourselves, unless indeed he has given us no strength to pull with. We may be utterly unable to untangle the meshes but God is not going to untangle them for us if we do not work at them with our own fingers. We may have just enough strength in our right arm to stretch it forth and no strength to do the work, but if we do not go as far as our strength permits we need not expect God to stretch out his arm along side of ours.

VI

Coming to A Point



THE most pitiful failures in life I ever met were people who never amounted to anything simply because they could not come to a point. They were always halting between two opinions; always swinging back and forth between duty and inclination; always seeing everything except the duty at hand; always sure of everything except their own minds.

We come upon these failures distressingly often. History is largely an account of the heroic efforts of a few men to bring their fellowmen to a decision. Moses spent forty years trying to screw the reso-

lution of his people up to the sticking point, and when Joshua took his place the work had to be done over again. You will recall Joshua's experience. His people wanted to worship God, but they also wanted to worship idols. They had been slow to learn that God is a jealous God and that he demands of his people the supreme, undivided affection that a husband demands of his wife. This double-mindedness had been the cause of their troubles in the past and it was evident to Joshua that if they did not overcome it it would result in their eternal ruin. He determined that they should overcome it. He called them together and told them that they simply had to come to a decision. They must choose between the God of Israel and the idols of their fathers. And they must decide emphatically, publicly, out loud. They must bring their fists down with a whack and declare once for all what they were going to do. They must get off the fence. They must come to the point or they would never come to

anything. Samuel, you will remember, made a similar effort. So did Elijah. So have all the great men whom God has sent to lead his people out of the wilderness.

Every master of men knows what it means to get a man to commit himself. He knows, as well as you and I do, that resolutions are not always followed by action, and that a resolution, like molasses candy, grows brittle as it grows cold; but he also knows that there is no right action until there is resolution, and that there is time for action before the resolution does grow cold. He knows also that a man does not serve God until he commits himself to serve God, while a man may serve Satan only by failure to commit himself to God. No one needs to decide to do wrong; he has only to fail to decide to do right. Doing wrong is a mere matter of rolling down hill. One does not need to decide to roll down hill; he has only to let himself loose. But one must decide for the right if one is going right, for going right

is climbing up hill, and we know that it takes decision to climb anywhere.

In everyday life there are few things so powerful, so far-reaching as decision. And decision comes from making decisions. If you never decide anything you will never have any decision, and indecision means inevitable, pitiful failure.

It is true that there are many things which we should not be quick to decide, and some things concerning which we should refuse to take sides; as in matters on which we have insufficient light and which do not demand an immediate decision. But there are other matters which we cannot afford to leave open for a single day. A man cannot put off eating his breakfast until he has studied chemistry and then analyzed his bread to find out whether his breakfast is worth while or not. The fundamental questions in everyday life must be settled, and they must be settled once for all. It is so with the fundamental questions of the spiritual life. Indecision not only cheats us out of every-

thing around us that is worth while but it cheats us out of everything within us that is worth while. The man who is always undecided is an annoying failure. Everybody knows Johnny Dillydally who could not decide which side he wanted to be on and as a consequence generally got himself left out of the baseball game ; who could not decide whether he would serve God or not and as a consequence is serving the devil, instead. To-day he is a lonely old bachelor because he could never decide which girl he loved best, and he is noted mainly for missing the train because he can never decide until it is too late whether he wants to go or not.

Here is a man who has a general notion that he wants to do right, but who has not yet determined to do right at all times and under all circumstances. That man's right doing does not amount to a row of pins. What he needs is to settle the thing absolutely once for all, and the experience of ages has proven that the surest way to settle it is to come out boldly before the

world and to take one's stand on the right side; to say out loud by word and by actions that sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish, as for me and my house, whatever others may do, we will serve the Lord. The very act of coming out on the Lord's side clears up the mind, strengthens the backbone, and makes one's determination ten times as strong as if one had only resolved in secret.

When Jesus had gotten his disciples to say from their hearts that he was the Christ he knew that the foundation was well laid, and that he could safely begin to build upon it. We can never be sure of the foundation of the man who has never come to the point about Christ and taken his stand for Christ; nor can the man himself feel sure of it. We never know what we know until we make an effort to express what is in our hearts.

VII

Taking God At His Word



AMONG the men of the Bible who interest us most stands well to the front the nobleman of Capernaum. And yet about all that we know about him is that he took Jesus at his word. He did not ask for a sign or pledge to assure him that Jesus would heal his son. He did not attempt to dictate to him as to when or how he should heal him. He did not lay his burden upon him and then take it up again. He simply took him at his word. He left the matter entirely in the Master's hands and went away with a light heart, perfectly confident that in his own way and in his

own good time he would keep his promise.

And the promise was kept. Of course! You cannot conceive that it could have turned out any other way under the circumstances.

When I recall how differently you and I have often acted under like circumstances I wonder that God should ever answer our prayers. Do you remember the last time you went to Jesus in an hour of great extremity and laid your case before him? You were driven to the wall, you said, and unless he should come to your help you were utterly undone. Your burden was greater than you could bear, and you told him you were going to lay it on his shoulders and let him bear it for you. And you laid the burden upon him, and poured out your soul to him, and promised to leave everything in his hands. But when you rose from your knees you deliberately took up your burden again and carried it away on your own heart. You could not trust him with it, and you carried it away and struggled with it until

your head and heart were aching worse than before, and you had to go back and pray again. And you said in your heart: "I believe God is going to help me but Oh! if he would only do something to show that he is really listening to me and is interested in my case! Why does he not give me a sign as he used to give his children in ancient times?" And in the same breath in which you declared your faith in God you asked for a sign which showed that you did not believe in him. And then you grew desperate, and before you knew it you were dictating to God as to how your prayer shall be answered. You had a note due on the morrow and you felt that if God really cared anything for you he would send the money, and he would send it to-day and not keep you in suspense about it. You wanted God to answer your prayer according to your own little wildly ticking watch and not in his own good time. And you even suggested to him what you regarded as the only way your prayer could be answered. You said:

“Lord, let me have enough money in to-day’s mail to meet that note.” It did not occur to your own poor little mind that God was depending upon your mail to meet your note, or that God had to meet your note at all in order to show his love for you.

How did it all turn out? You hardly know. Did God answer your prayer? You don’t know whether he did or not. The money did not come in the mail that day, that is certain, and it did not come the next. The fact is the note was not due as early as you thought. You thought that you were up against the wall and you were three days from the wall. But when it finally came due the money did not arrive. The fact is you had been extravagant and improvident in the management of your affairs. You thought you could make notes and trust to God, or to luck, or to something to pay them. But God saw that there was something that you needed more than money to pay that note. You needed a lesson. And you got what you needed.

You went down into the depths. But you learned the lesson, and when God saw that you had learned it he lifted you up again; and to-day the way is smooth before you, and there is no wall in sight, and the sun shines brighter than ever before.

And still you don't know whether God answered your prayer or not. Do you know why you are uncertain about it? It is because deep down in your heart you feel that such a prayer as that was not fit to be answered. You know that if your best friend had come to you for help and acted in the way you did he would not have gotten what he came for. You have no use for a friend who cannot take you at your word.

God wants us to trust him without signs just as a father wants his child to trust him without signs. Suppose my son should say to me, "Papa, you promised me a gun for Christmas, but I want you to do something that will make me know that you are going to give it to me." How would I feel toward my boy? But suppose

I should accede to his request. Suppose I should give him my watch and say to him, "Now take that and keep it until Christmas and see if you do not get your gun." Would that strengthen my boy's faith in me? Would he not say to himself, "I know now that I'll get the gun because papa will want his watch back again"? Does a father want to cultivate that sort of faith in his son?

I wish we could learn that this cry for signs is unworthy of us. It is so childish. Stand a baby in the middle of the floor, and insist upon its walking, and it will try to crawl. It longs to feel the floor with its hands as well as its feet. It is a sign of weakness always when one wants to lean on something. It takes strength to stand up and venture out upon the invisible. We are like little babes standing in the middle of the floor. The baby that has ventured and finds that he can walk is happy; he does not want to feel the floor with his hands. The Christian who has learned to walk, who has outgrown the faith by which

we crawl, does not long for signs and wonders; he does not want to feel the floor with his hands: he can walk!

VIII

A Good Prescription For the Journey



THE best prescription I ever tried was written not by a physician but by a philosopher. "Whatsoever things are true"—this is the way it reads — "whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Paul's idea was that if men would keep their minds steadfastly fixed upon the things that are true and honorable and right and pure and lovable, they would be filled with the truth, and would become

more honorable and just and pure and lovable. And experience has proven that Paul was right.

If you would be healthy think healthful thoughts.

When we remember how many bad thoughts creep into our minds even in our best moments we are inclined to feel that we ought not to be held responsible for our thinking. But we are not taught that we are responsible for the evil thoughts which Satan sometimes injects suddenly into the mind, though we are responsible for allowing them to remain in our minds. What Paul would have us remember is that we are responsible for the thoughts which control our lives. "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he." It is useless for us to place a finger upon our lips if we are not going to place a bridle upon our thoughts. It is useless for us to undertake to act right if we are not going to do our best to think right.

Nothing affects the whole of life so powerfully as one's every-day thinking. I

heard a great physician say that the best prescription a doctor ever gave a man was this very verse which I have just quoted. "If a man will keep his mind upon the things that are pure and good and right and lovable and of good report," he said, "in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred he will be a well man physically;" and he added, "a well man mentally, morally and spiritually also."

Many a man tries to live on a high plane in his outward life who is content to dwell in the very slums in the hidden life of his mind. If you and I intend to be Christians in deed, we must be Christians in thought. If we would do like Christ we must think like Christ. It is useless to try to be pure in our lives if we are going to sit down alone and deliberately give up our minds to impure thoughts. It is useless to try to be lovely and lovable if we are going to continue to think unlovely things. It is useless to try to love God with all the heart if we are not going to try to love him with all the mind.

What then? Let us take hold of our minds and bring them to God's altar. Here, Lord, is the brain thou hast given me. I would use it for thee. From this moment, by thy help, I will think thy thoughts!

IX

A Bad Start



ALL the world loves an honest man. All the world despises a liar. Everybody in town lays his heart at the feet of the young man who starts out in life proposing to be himself and nobody else; depending upon God and himself and nobody else; refusing to take advantage of any accident of name or position;—a young man who prizes his character above all things; a hearty hater of sham and pretense, who would rather die than climb to the highest pinnacle of fame under false colors. On the other hand there never lived a man who did not despise a hypocrite, a de-

ceiver. And yet there are multitudes of young men and young women, boys and girls, who start out in life deliberately undertaking to make their way through the world pretending to be something that they are not. A little girl has an inordinate desire to be considered more genteel than all her set, and straightway begins to live a life of pretense and sham. She tells a hundred little lies about how many fine jewels her mother owns, and how grand her kinfolks are, and how much money her father makes. She grows up to womanhood with the same inordinate desire and keeps up the habit. She comes from a very ordinary family but she must make the world believe that she is high-born. Her grand-parents came over in the steerage from Ireland, and she must pay a college of heraldry to trace her descent back to William the Conqueror. Her paternal ancestors seldom wore a coat and the same college of heraldry is employed to invent for her a coat of arms. A little boy wants

to go fishing on the sly and affects illness and stays from school. He wants to buy a circus ticket and asks papa for fifty cents to put in the missionary box, quieting his guilty conscience in the meantime with the thought that missionaries and circuses both have to do with savages. When he is grown the same inordinate desire for gain finds a thousand opportunities to pretend to be what he is not. He spends six months in college and fails to stand a single examination, but when he wants to be a school teacher he parades as a university graduate. By and by his brother goes to a foreign land and is lost sight of to the world, and when his father dies he pretends to be the only surviving son and inherits all the property. He runs for Congress pretending to be for free trade when at heart he is for protection, or vice-versa.

And all the while he is trying to quiet his guilty conscience with the reflection that he does not mean any harm and that therefore he is not really building his life upon a lie.

There are at least three ways of telling a lie. We call a man who deliberately, unblushingly, recklessly says that which is untrue with the intention to deceive a liar. But he does not belong in a class by himself. The man who acts a lie is of the same stripe, only more skillful or less reckless. So is the man who tells that which is true yet with the intention of deceiving. He is more skillful still—a pastmaster in the art. We have all three of these ways in the story of Jacob and Esau. When Jacob goes to his blind old father and represents himself as Esau he tells a falsehood by both word and deed. When Rebekah puts the skin of a kid on Jacob's hands she helps him to act a lie. Later, when she goes to Isaac and declares that she is worn out with anxiety lest Jacob should marry among the daughters of Heth as Esau had done and urges him to send him away, she deceives him by telling him the truth but not the whole truth. The main difference between an unblushing liar and one who deceives by diplomacy is a differ-

ence of skill, not of heart. Your modern Jacob lies down on a couch one morning and proceeds to look very wretched. "What is the matter, Jacob?" asks mother. "Nothing," replies the boy in the exact tone which he always employs when he is ill. "Are you sick?" "No-o'm," drawls the boy, and mother passes on. Little Jacob is a diplomatist. Presently the mother comes back and places her hand on his brow. Yes, he is feverish. He must have a little fever. Jacob must not go to school to-day. The little rascal can hardly stay on his couch for joy. By telling the truth with his lips and acting a lie he has deceived his mother more effectually than if he had told a downright falsehood. Little Jacob has lied—artistically lied.

What is it that prompts us on the very threshold of life to build our lives on a lie? The answer is in one word: greed. Most of us start out in life like a boy chasing a butterfly—with both hands outstretched. We want everything in sight and we want it quick. The desire for gain

is God-given and it is not to be destroyed. Without it we would never aim at anything and never achieve anything. But it must be curbed or it will lead us to ruin. An inordinate desire for anything will lead a man to try to get what he desires either by violence or by the safer methods of deceit. Violence is risky and sometimes costly. Any poor coward can be a deceiver. If we would escape a life of either violence or deceit we must first escape greed. We must bridle our desires. And we must put the bridle on at the beginning.

Letting Jesus Help Us



ESUS came into the world to help the world, not to be helped by the world; to put something into it, not to get what he could out of it; to do his best for it, not to get the best of it. It was not the way of the average man and the average man did not understand it. The world never understands the man who looks out for the other fellow. The only solution to the mystery is that there must be a selfish motive behind it. We expect every man to look out for number one, and if we find him looking out for number two we are tempted to suspect that it is only

a blind. So when a man undertakes to help his fellowmen he has a good deal of hard work to do to convince them that he is in earnest.

Jesus had to spend a great deal of time in convincing men that he had no interest of his own to serve, and that his whole desire was to supply their deepest wants. He did not spend a moment looking out for himself. He did not stand up for the rights which the world gives to every man who comes into it. He did not even insist upon his right to a place to lay his head. He did not claim that the world owed him a living. He did not grasp at anything as his own. And whenever he did anything for men it was done so freely that no man ever thought of offering to pay him for his service. The nobleman of Capernaum would not have dared to send him the camel-load of precious things which surely would have gone to any other man that had healed his son.

And he was always doing things for men. He did a great many things for them

not so much to help them as to make them feel that he was ready to help them and that he could supply their deepest wants.

This, it seems to me, is the meaning of the feeding of the five thousand. The people were not starving. They could have gone home for their supper or they could have gone supperless to bed without serious harm, but he provided the supper with the hope that some of them might be led to look to him for the things they needed most. I do not mean that he had no desire to provide a supper for the supperless; but that was not the main thing; the main thing was to lead the people to feel that he could satisfy all of their wants. He has compassion for the hungry multitude going supperless to bed. He has a deeper compassion for men who have a deeper hunger—the hunger of the soul. And as he has abundant resources to supply the physical wants of men, so he has abundant resources to supply their spiritual wants.

It was the one consuming desire of Jesus. The people were in great need.

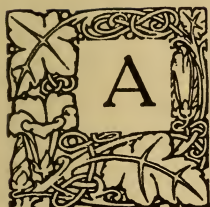
Never were people in greater need. And he had come richly supplied with everything which they needed. If they could only be made to realize that he could really satisfy their wants! And so he went about among them holding out his hands filled with good things, inviting them to come, begging them to come, trying to entice them by giving them glimpses of the good things he had brought and oftentimes scattering handfuls of blessings among them; and yet though they accepted the good things which he scattered among them—the healing of their sick, the cleansing of their lepers, the raising of their dead, the bread for their hungry—they still stood aloof, shy, mistrusting, wondering whether they should have anything to do with him. “Can you not understand”—one can almost hear him say as he divides the loaves and the fishes—“can you not understand, O my people, that I have come to satisfy all your wants, to fill the hungry soul with goodness?”

And is not this the meaning of every

good gift which comes from God to us to-day? You and I have had many good things from him during the past year. He has supplied this want and that and the other. Are not these gifts so many assurances that he is ready to supply all of our wants? If he sends sunshine into our windows, is it not an assurance that he is ready to send sunshine into our souls also? If he sends showers of rain, does it not mean that he would also send showers of spiritual blessing if we would only open our hearts to him? If he provides bread, does not every loaf say to us that God wants to provide the bread of life for our souls also?

And shall you and I go on day after day reaching out our hands to take these lesser blessings and refuse to open our hearts to the greater? Shall we not let him satisfy all of our wants?

The Bread of Life



LITTLE child wanders away from home and is lost. By-and-by he grows faint with hunger and lies down, and when at last he is found he is too weak to rise. He is starving to death. But his father gives him a bit of bread, and lo! a miracle. The light comes back to his eyes, the blood to his cheek, the strength to his limbs, and soon he is on his feet again supported by the bit of bread, which is the staff of life.

Jesus is the bread which the Father offers to his starving children. What bread is to our physical nature Christ is to our spiritual nature. If the hungry child turns

away from the proffered bread his hunger will never be satisfied and he will die. If we turn away from the Savior whom the Father offers us our hunger will never be satisfied and we will die. If the child receives the bread, if he appropriates it, if he makes use of it, the nutriment that it contains will find its way into his blood and every part of his body will be nourished and strengthened by it. If we will receive Christ, if we will open our hearts to him, if we will give ourselves up wholly to him, if we will let him have his way with us and in us, if we will not resist him in any way but will give up our whole being to be used by him, if we will let him have his way with our thoughts, our affections, our tempers, our tongues, our hands, our feet, he will impart his life to us, he will be as nourishing food to our souls.

But how may we feed on Christ? Just as the Israelites fed on the manna in the wilderness. They went out every morning and looked for it, and brought it in and appropriated it to themselves; they par-

took of it; they received it into themselves trusting that it would preserve them and meet their bodily needs. So we should go every day, at the beginning, and often throughout the day, and look for Him for whom our souls hunger—look for him in prayer, in the quiet ten minutes with our Bibles, in the still hour of communion with our thoughts; and when we have found him, when our thoughts have become fixed upon him, when we have become conscious of him, we should appropriate him—that is, we should open our hearts wide to receive him; we should say to him: “Here, Lord, is thy own; enter in and take possession of me; put thy strength into this right arm; put thy love into this cold heart; put thy wisdom into this narrow mind; use thine own.” And we should open our hearts to him as the Israelites opened their mouths to receive the manna, believing, knowing, that he will give us the strength that we need for the day.

We may not understand how bread sus-

tains life, supplies strength and helps us to grow, but we thoroughly appreciate the fact that if we cease to eat we will cease to grow, our strength will leave us, and we will inevitably die. And we do not refuse to eat on the ground that we do not understand the processes of nutriment. We know that Nature will not say of one of us: "He does not eat, but then he does not understand why he should eat, and therefore he must not be allowed to die. He shall live whether he eats or not." Yet that is precisely the attitude of multitudes in the matter of spiritual nourishment. A man says he cannot see how accepting Christ can do him any good. He is trying to serve God and to deal justly with his fellow-men, and knowing nothing of this mystery of spiritual nourishment he does not see why he should not let it alone. If he is sinning against God he can plead ignorance as an excuse. But suppose a man who refuses to eat should say: "If I am sinning against the law of nature, I can plead ignorance as an excuse?" Will that

keep him from starving? The question with us is not whether we can understand how Christ becomes our nourishment; we can no more afford to wait to have that explained to us than we can wait to have the mysteries of nutriment explained before eating our breakfast. The question is, Shall we open our hearts, our whole being, to Christ, and let him fill us with himself?

XII

Knowing the Lord



MAN to whom the Son of God had been revealed by the Holy Spirit pointed to Jesus and told his companions that he was the One their hearts had been crying for—the Lamb of God who alone could take away their sins. They sought his presence; Jesus knowing their hearts turned to meet them; meeting him face to face their hearts were satisfied, and they hastened to tell other hungry souls about him.

Here in a nutshell is the history, on the human side, of all that has been done to set up the kingdom of Christ upon the

earth. It is simply a matter of getting men to know the Lord. If we know him we will love him; if we love him we will serve him; if we serve him we will bring others to know him and therefore to serve him. When the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth the servants of the Lord shall fill it. We cannot know the Lord without loving him and we cannot love him without serving him.

It is a personal matter. You and I must personally know a personal Christ. The two disciples seeing Jesus went after him. They were not content to learn about him at second hand. They might have gone to Jerusalem and consulted the rabbis; they might have searched the records of the family of David at Bethlehem; they might have spent a week in Nazareth making inquiries of his neighbors. This would have been the scientific method, and by this method they would doubtless have learned something about Jesus. But John had awakened their hearts, and they were hungry not for knowledge about the Mes-

siah but to know the Messiah, and they followed the inclination of their hearts and went straight after him. That it was an impulse of the heart rather than the head is indicated by the fact that they went without planning beforehand what they would say or do when they should overtake him. Their hearts were longing for the Lamb appointed by God to take away sin.

This is the truth we want to learn—that it is the personal knowledge of Christ as Lord which makes men servants of Christ. If we want to love Christ more and serve him better we must get better acquainted with him. If we want to get others to know him we must first know him ourselves. There is absolutely no substitute for this method. We sit complaining of the coldness of our hearts and wishing that something would happen to make us love God better. Meanwhile we neglect the quiet moments and the open Bible and every other means by which men are brought face to face with God. We ask God to help us to love him better and never

make an effort to know him better. It is an insult to God, just as it would be an insult to a neighbor whose acquaintance we do not care to cultivate if we should say to him, "I wish you would help me to love you." We may pray for a warmer heart toward God as much as we please; we may speculate about Jesus as much as we please; we may complain of our coldness until we are numb; we may wait for a miracle till doomsday; but so long as we neglect the opportunities we have to know Jesus better we will never learn to love him better, and we will never serve him better. To complain of our coldness toward God is to confess that we have neglected our opportunities to commune with him.

When Jesus called his disciples into his service he did not tell them to follow along behind him, and do as they saw him do—they might have done that forever and it would not have made them successful fishers of men. He said to them: "You have made a great haul; but come with me and I'll show you how to do something better

still. I'll make you fishers of men." And they went with him; they associated with him, day and night, drinking in his words, drinking in his spirit, imbibing his wisdom, becoming saturated with his love; and when they had become in some sense like unto this great fisher of men, they too began to catch men. It was not by the mere imitation of Christ, but by association with Christ that we become fishers of men.

XIII

Making the Most of Our Talents



ESUS expects me to wait for his coming, not as a host who has set his house in order for his guest, but as a servant who is waiting for his master's return. It is not enough that the servant should have the house in order; he must be prepared to show that he has done his best with the responsibilities which his master placed upon him. The servant who is ready for his master is the servant who has kept busy doing his master's will.

God put me here. This is his world and I am his servant. He put me here for a purpose. My place, whatever it may be,

is a post of duty. Every man, woman and child is on duty. In this world nobody is off duty save the dead and the imbecile. While we have life in us, while we have a spark of intellect in us, while we have a particle of strength left in us, we have something to do. Our strength may be small and it may be a little thing which God expects of us, but he will expect that thing. He has a right to expect it because he has given us the strength and the opportunity to do it. One may say that the Lord in the parable had servants to whom he gave no talents. Never mind: we do not hear that he required anything of them. If we have nothing God will require nothing, but I think there is hardly one of us prepared to admit that we are quite dead, imbecile, nil.

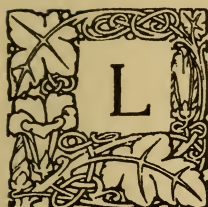
When we come to ask ourselves the question whether we are doing our duty, it is not a matter of any importance whether our opportunities are many or few, whether we have great talents or small, whether we are extraordinarily bright or extraordi-

narily dull, whether we are as rich as Croesus or as poor as poverty; the question is, whether we are making the most of the opportunity, the strength, the abilities we have. I have a capacity for religion: am I as deeply religious as I can be? I have a capacity for loving God: do I love him with all the strength I have? I may not have any talent for speaking, but I have the ability to smile. That is a small thing, but with it I may scatter much sunshine. Am I making the most of my ability to smile? Do I scatter as much sunshine as I can, or do I sit down and fold my hands because my talent is so trifling? The lord in the parable did not expect the man to whom he gave one talent to make five talents, or two, but he might have made one. He was absolutely inexcusable for making no use of the one, for at the very least he might have deposited it where it could have drawn interest. The teaching is plain; there is absolutely no excuse for a man who has a single talent if he neglects to use that talent. It is not

necessary that he should be talented or that he should have a talent for doing one thing. It is only necessary that he should have something which he can use for good or for the glory of God. Am I making the most of the small ability I have? I count up the things God has put in my hands—the time, the everyday opportunities of life, the capacity to love him, the ability to scatter sunshine, strength of hand to serve those around me, swiftness of foot to carry help or a message of comfort to some one in the distance—they are small, they are very small; but am I making the most of these things? Am I using them so faithfully that I will be able to stand before the Master when he calls for a reckoning and make my report without shame? That is the question and that is the only question.

XIV

Taking Hazardous Risks



IFE is full of perils. There is not a spot on earth that is free from possible danger. Many a man has lost his life lying in bed, by the falling of a wall. Wherever

we go there is but a step between us and death. To refuse to run any risk is to refuse to live, for there is danger even in breathing. We cannot eliminate danger from life; the best we can do is to steer clear of certain peril and to exert the utmost care while walking amid possible dangers.

The dangers of life may be divided between the dangers which must be met and the dangers which should be avoided.

There are some dangers which must be met every moment. Danger lurks in the air we breathe, but it is not our duty to avoid breathing; it is only our duty to take every precaution we can against breathing bad air. There is a possible danger in the walls which surround us in our homes, but it is not our duty to live in the open fields; it is only our duty to see that the walls which surround us are made as secure as possible. One may run the risk of driving a horse provided one knows how to drive, though "a horse is a vain thing for safety;" and one may play with a well disposed dog though it is the nature of dogs to bite. On the other hand, there are dangers so great that we cannot afford under any circumstances to expose ourselves to them. It would be criminal, for instance, for a man who is subject to attacks of dizziness to attempt to walk a rope or climb a steeple. It would be criminal for an ordinary man to play with poisonous serpents. There are things so dangerous that we cannot even afford to come

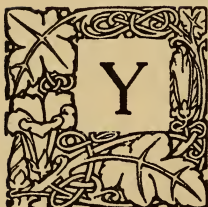
near them or to look upon them. Drink, for example, is one of these dangers. It is not one of the ordinary dangers of life. It is not one which we can afford to handle, even with care. It is something to run from; and to run from it is the better part of valor. The wise man of Proverbs places drink on a level with serpents. When a man finds himself in the neighborhood of an adder, the only sensible thing for him to do is to get out of that neighborhood as quickly as possible. Drink is as dangerous as an adder: one may as well attempt to caress a poisonous serpent as to expose himself to this temptation. This is the wise man's proposition and he establishes it. He has good reason for putting wine and serpents in the same class, for they are often found in the same glass. Drink is for all the world like the serpents that charm men. You see it glow in the cup, you see its eye—the pretty beaded bubbles that charm men of appetite; you see it sparkling and foaming—"moving itself aright." You are drawn towards it.

Presently when it has you in its power, it turns to sting you. It is the way of the charming serpent. Suppose you should stop suddenly in some secluded wood, to find yourself in the presence of such a serpent. What would you do? If you knew its charming power do you think you would risk yourself in its presence? Would you look upon it when it is red?—when it turns its eye upon you?—when it moves itself aright? Would you not fly in terror lest you should be brought under its power, and would you feel ashamed of yourself for running? Would you feel that you had played the coward, or would you care if you had played it? Now, says the wise man, this wineglass is like that serpent. It will not charm you as quickly, but it will bury its fangs in you the moment it gets you in its power, just as that serpent will. What will you do about it? Will you expose yourself to it? Will you frequent places where it is to be found? Should you not, on the very threshold of manhood or womanhood, set down drink

and every other form of pleasure that inflames the appetite as among the perils which are too great to be handled? Should you not decide that, whether the world laughs at you for running or not, whether it calls you a coward or a fool, you will run from this danger?

And after all, which is the greater fool and the greater coward—the man who laughs at another for getting out of the way of the poisonous serpent, or the man who stands before the serpent and tries to play with it, because he is afraid his companions will laugh if he should run?

Escaping the World's Magnetism



YOU have a friend who is noted for his devotion to whatever he undertakes. The other day you went with him to a distant city on business, and while there you lost sight of him. One afternoon you went to look him up, and when at last you came upon him he was just where you would have expected to find him if you had but stopped to think. When you told him of your anxiety he was both surprised and grieved. This man was accustomed to spell duty with a large D, and he could not understand why anyone should look for him away from his

post. "Did you not know that I was attending to this business?" he said. "Did I not come to the city for this very purpose? Why should you have been uneasy about me?"

Something of this feeling the boy Jesus must have had when, sitting at the feet of the doctors in the temple, he turned to look up into his mother's face. He was so completely absorbed in his Father's matters that the alternative of being elsewhere than in his Father's house, or engaged in anything but his Father's business had not occurred to him. His inclinations were all that way and anything else would have been unnatural to him.

This is what you and I want—to be so strongly inclined to the right and the good that it will be natural for us to seek the best things. The trouble with most of us is that our inclinations are all the other way. We purpose to do right but our bent is toward the wrong. Our aspirations reach to the stars, but our appetites descend to the dust. Our aim is to walk in

the path of duty but our disposition is to wander out of it. If our inclinations would only go along with our resolutions and our better judgment!

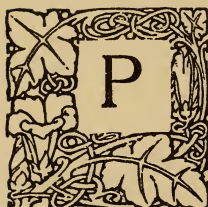
What was it that drew the boy Jesus as by a magnet toward his Father's affairs? For a boy left alone in a great city deliberately to choose to spend his time at the feet of great religious teachers is so unnatural that, to many minds, it is almost incredible. Jesus could do it because he was divine, says one. Or, he was a pale, sickly child who cared nothing for the sights, says another. But it was not the divinity in Jesus that hungered for the knowledge of the truth at the feet of the rabbis; it was the human Jesus. And there is no evidence that he was a sickly boy with no interest in the beautiful world around him. There is nothing of the invalid in any picture which we have of our Lord from Bethlehem to Calvary. Jesus was drawn to his Father's house because his heart was set upon his Father. This is the whole story. Where a man's heart

has gone, there will he go also. His heart being with his Father, the rest of his being was drawn toward his Father. If his heart had been set upon the world he would have been drawn body and mind and soul to the things of the world, but his heart being set upon his Father he was drawn away from the world.

Here is the solution to one of the most serious problems of life. If you and I are to escape the magnetism of the world we must put our hearts as far from the world as possible; we must give our hearts to God. No man is strong enough to keep himself from the world by sheer force. We follow our hearts as a mother follows her child. If we will give our hearts to God we will be drawn toward God and the things of God. Our footsteps will be drawn toward his house; our eyes will be drawn toward his guiding hand; our hands will be drawn toward his work; our thoughts will be drawn toward his word.

XVI

The Fear of Being Different



PERHAPS you have been very faithful in performing all those acts which we are in the habit of regarding as pious duties. You have not missed a Sunday at church or at Sunday School in a year, you have never forgotten to say your prayers morning or night, and the dust has never been allowed to rest upon your Bible. Sometimes you feel a little tired. Are you ever tempted at such a moment to ask whether after all it is worth while to be so pious—whether you might not get along just as well with less church going, and less praying, and less Bible reading—whether you

would not get along just as well if you should live more like other people? Are you tempted to feel at such a moment that this thing of being different from other people is largely self-conceit—that it is the duty of one who lives in Rome to do as Rome does? Take care and beware. Satan has no stronger means of tempting you. Do you remember when the Israelites went to Samuel and begged for a king? With the exception of their seasons of spiritual exaltation, when they were glad to acknowledge Jehovah as their absolute sovereign, Israel had always wanted a king. When their hearts were warm, they had gloried in the fact that they were unlike other nations; but now that their hearts were cold their greatest ambition was to be like other nations. They no longer had the courage to resist public opinion; they did not want to be a peculiar people: backsliders always have a horror of being a peculiar people. We know how cold a church is by the struggle it makes not to be peculiar.

There is nothing more subtle, more deceptive than Satan's argument in favor of a Christian living like other people. It is his master stroke. He knows full well that if he can induce a Christian to live like other people he can induce him to live just as he wants him to live, for these people whom we are tempted to live like are likely to be living just as Satan wants them to live. Nowhere in the Bible am I told that it is my duty to live like other people. Nowhere am I told that it is my duty to do like Charles, or William, or Henry, or Mary. It is my duty to do right. I have nothing to do with Charles, or William, or Henry, or Mary except to help them to do right. It is not self-conceit that makes a Christian want to live different from the world. It is not because he wants to live different from other people, but because he wants to live like the people of God.

XVII

The Tyrant Appetite



ELL a man who is living in sin that he is a slave and he will laugh in your face. He would have you understand that he is his own master, and that he can do as he pleases; that these sins which he commits are but trifles, mere playthings which he can toss about at will. He has a will of his own. He is no slave. But one dreary morning he wakes up with a sense of the burden of sin. He is tired and he wants to get rid of the burden and he rises to shake it off. Alas! he cannot shake it off. He who has always regarded himself as his own master finds himself mas-

tered. He who has always had a will of his own finds that he has mistaken its power. He who has thought that his sins were playthings now finds them chains, heavy, hard and cruel. He is bound hand and foot. His mind is in chains as he finds when he tries to rid it of sinful thoughts. His body is in chains as he finds when he tries to shake off his sinful habits. His heart is in chains as he finds when he tries to empty it of his sinful desires. He is a slave—a miserable, helpless slave.

The trouble about this tyrant is that he begins by taking hold of a man where he is weakest. "The spirit indeed is willing," said Jesus, "but the flesh is weak." And the flesh is always weak. "My heart is with you," said a great politician to a temperance audience, "but my appetite is against you." A man will ring clear in his innermost soul on almost every question of right, but in his body he is only a puny babe. If the spiritual man does not rise up and take his body absolutely under his con-

trol, his body in its weakness will go to the bad, and his spirit will go with it. Appetite takes hold of the body and if it is not hindered it soon gets absolute control of it. A man swallows wine and soon wine swallows him. "They are swallowed up of wine."

It would not be so bad if it stopped here. The victim of appetite would only be on a level with the victim of typhoid, which destroys the body and leaves the spirit untouched. The trouble is when appetite gets control of the body it has only begun its deadly work. Its thirst is insatiable. It drinks the blood of men and is not satisfied. It sucks up the brains of men and cries for more. It reaches out and gets hold of the moral nature and saps all its juices. When a man gives his body over to the indulgence of appetite he gives over the whole man. When it has had its way a man is devoid of all moral sense. The moral sense goes first. He may see clearly with his intellect long after he has lost power to see with his moral

nature. Self-indulgence reaches out after the will. It finds its way along down the moral backbone and sucks all the strength out of it. A drunkard has no more backbone than a jelly-fish. The will is destroyed, and when the will is destroyed the man is destroyed.

What will save a man from the tyranny of appetite? What is the one sure remedy for every form of self-indulgence? There are remedies enough, to be sure, such as they are. Nearly everybody has a favorite prescription which he would like to try—on somebody else. But the trouble with the average remedy which men advertise, whether it is for the cure of consumption or the cure of an evil habit, is that it doesn't go to the root of the matter. Your anti-swearing prescription may stop a man from profanity, but it does not reach the evil within that led him to swear. You simply cure one sore—stop up one outlet—and presently the evil in the blood breaks out at another point. A man may stop drinking and, like the Mohammedan tee-

totaler, break out in unspeakable forms of impurity. What we want is a remedy that will reach the innermost springs of evil.

And this the gospel has furnished. What is the gospel prescription for the cure of evil habits? Simply this: "Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." That is, open your heart to Christ, put yourself in his hands, allow yourself to be dominated in all things by his Spirit, and you will no longer be influenced by your sinful appetites. There is no mystery about this. It is a perfectly scientific prescription based upon the law that nature abhors a vacuum. If your heart is full of evil desires you do not accomplish anything by trying to get them out. It is like dipping air out of a glass. If you want to get the air out of the glass you don't need to bother about getting it out; you simply want to put something else in—something that is strong enough to push the air out and to keep it out. Fill the glass with water and the problem is solved. So if you want to rid your heart

of evil desires, you do not need to bother about getting them out—you simply want to put something else in—something that is strong enough to expel the evil desires and keep them out. There is one thing that is utterly antagonistic to the “flesh,” and that is the Spirit. If you will open your heart to the Spirit, if you will surrender yourself to Christ and have him take possession of your heart, then the problem is solved. The moment Christ dominates you, sinful desires will cease to dominate you. “For these are contrary the one to the other.”

XVIII

When Reason is Dethroned



LOVE is the greatest thing in the world because it is the nearest point of approach to God. Hate is the worst thing in the world because it is the farthest point we can get from God. Love is of the very nature of God, for God is love. Hate is the most ungodlike thing that can enter into the heart of man. When a man is controlled by the spirit of hate he ceases to bear any resemblance to God. The divine likeness is gone. He is no longer a man, for a true man bears the image of his Maker. He is a brute. When we come to think of it there is practically no difference

between a man who is filled with hate and a brute. He is no longer a reasoning or reasonable being. He is no longer master of himself. He is a victim—a victim of a brutal passion. He cannot see things as they are. Everything that he does is of an irresponsible sort like the irresponsible acts of brutes. We think of an intoxicated man as one who has defiled the temple of the Holy Ghost and brought the image of God into the dust. An angry man does the very same thing—he falls from the level of manhood down to the level of a brute.

Who has not noticed the utter lack of perception, of reason, of judgment in the man who is set on fire with hate? Here is God reasoning with Cain. It is as plain as the sun that no one is to blame but Cain himself. Reason must demand that the man should put the blame where it belongs and confess his sin and beg forgiveness, but in his anger Cain does not hear the dictates of reason. Reason has been dethroned. He cannot see that he is a wrong-

doer, he sees himself as the wronged one. He imagines that God has shown partiality and that therefore God is to blame. And then he imagines that Abel is to blame—though just what Abel had to do with it he could not tell if his life depended upon it. He simply blames Abel because God has favored him. How utterly absurd! And yet he goes on nursing his wrongs under the impression that he is doing a perfectly reasonable thing. Everybody else is unreasonable, he alone is reasonable.

But that is not all. Cain is not only unable to see things as they are but he is devoid of judgment. Wisdom would have said, Now while I am feeling as I do toward my brother I will avoid him, lest I precipitate trouble. But angry Cain has no wisdom. Wisdom has been dethroned. And instead of avoiding his brother he goes to look for him. One cannot easily do a more foolish thing than go to seek another while in a passion. But even this is not all. He is not only devoid of perception and judgment but he is like all

other brutes; he is devoid of self-control. Perhaps he persuades himself that he can go and talk this matter over in a very reasonable way with his brother. He is not going to say one word that he ought not to say, but he is going to talk straight from the shoulder. But when he reaches his brother and his tongue starts, it goes without a bridle and in another moment it is running away. Did you ever see anything quite so foolish as a man whose tongue is running away and setting everything on fire as it goes? Is it strange that a man who has allowed hate to dethrone every godlike thing within him and to bring him down to the level of a brute should do a brutal thing and in a moment of brutal passion pounce upon his fellow-man and slay him? Is it not the nature of love to preserve and protect, and is it not the nature of hate to destroy?

If I want to be a man—if I want to be like God—let me beware of this horrid monster that finds its way into the heart only to drag reason from its throne, and

to destroy the image of God that is within me and to make a very brute where once there was a man.

XIX

The Manliest Thing



THE manliest thing a man can do who has wronged his neighbor is to go straight to him and acknowledge the wrong and beg forgiveness.

It is not only the manliest thing, but it is the only manly thing for such a time. Most of us imagine that we must lay aside our manhood to go to one we have wronged; but those of us who have been through such an experience know that we laid aside our manhood when we wronged our neighbor and that we did not get it back until we went to him. Try it: if you do not feel more manly after you have asked forgive-

ness it will be because you do not know the feeling of manhood. In view of this fact is it not strange that so many of us should go about day after day with a miserable, soiled sensation—a sensation of being less than a man, a sensation that keeps us from either happiness or usefulness—all because we imagine that it is unmanly to go to the man whom we have wronged and beg his forgiveness?

I said it is the manliest thing and the only thing. If this is true in our relations with our neighbor how much more is it true in our relations with God! When a man wrongs his neighbor it is bad, but when he wrongs his supreme benefactor—when he stretches forth an arm that God has given him against God himself; when he profanes the name of God with the voice he has received from God—that is something infinitely, inexpressibly worse. Moreover, when a man wrongs his neighbor he throws himself out of gear with his neighbor and, in some sense, with mankind; but when he wrongs God he throws

himself out of gear with the whole universe. Do you see that great engine in the mill yonder running with the band off the wheel? What is it doing? Consuming fuel by the ton and time by the hour and occasionally blowing off useless steam. That is all. And that will be all until the band is put back upon the wheel. You may shovel all the coal into it that it will hold, but it will not turn a single spindle in all the mill. That engine is not more completely cut off from the possibility of usefulness than is the man who has thrown himself out of gear with the universe by sinning against God. Try as you may, so long as you are at enmity with God nothing you can do will be worth while. There is but one thing in the world for the sinner to do and that is to go to God, and the sooner he goes the better.

David felt this in the very depths of his heart when he threw himself on his face before the Lord and poured out his soul in a cry for forgiveness that sounded like a man crying for his life. And he was in-

deed crying for his life. He felt that he was utterly undone and that he could never do anything unless God would forgive him. If God would forgive him then he would be clean again and worthy of a place in the world. If God would forgive him then he would be useful again: he would teach transgressors God's way and sinners would be converted to him. If God would forgive him he would be happy again: his mouth would show forth God's praise.

If we could only bring ourselves to realize this great truth! If we could only feel that when we have sinned there is nothing worth doing until we have gone to God—that until we are forgiven we will be out of gear with the universe, and can know no happiness and can do nothing worth doing!

Our Present Healer



HIS meek and holy One of Galilee whose gentle countenance draws the little children to him, who speaks with infinite tenderness to the helpless—this man who is love itself, is a terror to all diseases, all demons, all evil things. He goes about Galilee overflowing with virtue; and before the virtue which goes out of him evil spirits flee in terror, and all diseases vanish. No evil thing can stand in his presence. Devils struggle to keep their hold, but are forced into precipitate retreat. Death itself, at the sound of his voice, relinquishes its clammy grasp on its victim

and is gone. And all the while one may look into his face and see only infinite compassion. There is no harshness in his voice, no sword in his hand. He is life and health; and death, and therefore disease must vanish before him.

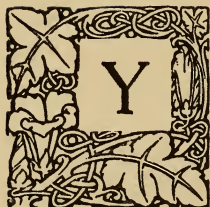
Sometimes when we look on the scene our hearts ache with envy. If he were only with us to-day as he was with those people of Galilee! If he would only come and place his tender hand upon mother's aching brow; if he would but take our little dying daughter by the hand and lift her up! If he would but come quietly in when the doctor has said there is no hope and take charge of the hopeless case!

If! But he does! Many and many a time he has come in answer to our cry as truly as he came to those who cried after him in Capernaum. Sometimes, indeed, he chooses only to soothe the heart while the head keeps throbbing, for he knows it is better; and sometimes he reaches out his hand to the little dying daughter, and instead of raising her up

into a life of pain and darkness and struggle and mystery, lifts her up to himself where there is no pain nor darkness nor struggle nor mystery. Besides, he is healing men of diseases far more terrible than any mere physical ailment.

This is what we want to lay on our hearts—that Jesus is among us as our healer as truly as he was among the Capernaumites as their healer, and that among us he is healing men of worse diseases than the fever and leprosy which he rebuked in Capernaum. We sit still in our homes moaning over our own soul-sickness or over the progress of disease in the hearts of our sons and daughters while the Great Physician passes by unnoticed. Here is a loved one possessed of a spirit as vile and stubborn almost as the unclean devil that possessed the man in the synagogue—a beastly temper, perhaps, or an unclean appetite; a disposition to lie; a cynical spirit; a revengeful spirit; a malicious spirit. Do we believe that the Great Physician has power to cast out such a demon?

Do we believe that the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse the vilest heart? Do we believe that Jesus can save a drunkard? Do we believe that he can purify a fallen woman? Do we believe he can change a man who is dishonest at the core? Then why do we shake our heads over such cases? Why do we weep so much over our lost ones and pray so little over them? Why is it that we are hopeful only of the hopeful cases? Why is it that we who profess to believe that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin have so little hope of the man whom we have discovered to be full of sin?

Everyday Demoniacs

YOU know a little maiden who is as sweet as a peach until she loses her temper, when in a twinkling she is transformed into a little—demon. That is what you call her, and when you have seen her fall upon the floor, and tear her hair and almost foam at the mouth in her rage you do not feel that there is any other name for her. But when it is all over and the little thing is lying exhausted in her mother's arms and sobbing so pitifully, not in anger but in genuine sorrow for it all, you change your mind, and you are sure any other name would be better.

You know a boy who is as good, as boys go, as any boy in the neighborhood—for a day. And the next day he will crowd into a single half-hour more fiendish deeds than an ordinary boy will do in a week. Yet, when it is all over, and you have asked him about it, you are convinced that he did not do it for revenge, or even for fun, or for any other reason in the wide world that he knows of. He simply cannot tell why he did it. And there are grown-up boys and girls that you and I know to whom come moments now and then when one seems to be born unto badness as the sparks fly upward. And yet, when these moments have passed there is humiliation and sorrow beyond measure.

I would not say that these are cases of demoniacal possession such as we find in the Bible story. They are not. But there are some very striking resemblances. In ancient times everybody looked upon a demoniac as a hopeless case, and he was. No other human being was so completely bound. No human power could break his

chains. But by and by Jesus came, and with superhuman power he broke them. And immediately hope came to birth in the hearts of those who had loved ones that were possessed by demons. If only the afflicted one could be brought to Jesus all would be well.

To-day almost everybody looks upon the helpless victim of temper or drink or other horrible vice as a hopeless case. We know there is no slavery like the slavery of sin. I have seen men thrown by the drink demon as easily as a giant could trip up a little child. I have seen a man struggle against a horrible temper as a fly struggles in a spider's web. I have seen men who would have given their very lives to escape a vice that had entwined itself about them like an octopus. The world has tried every human means to break the chains of sin, and it has failed. Resolutions cannot do it. Education cannot do it. Will-power cannot do it. One's friends cannot do it. And because nothing we can do is of any avail, we sometimes grow dis-

couraged and give up, and consent to believe ever afterwards that there is no hope. But there is hope. Jesus has come. He who set the demoniacs free has also set free multitudes of men who have sinned as if they too were possessed of demons. He has saved the little maid from her terrible spasms of temper. He has saved that boy from his fiendish tendencies. He has saved an old man from vices that have grown up around him in an apparently hopeless tangle for half a century. And he can save you and me. Why should we be content to think of Christ as a savior from sins in general? Why should we not look to him to save us from our own sins in particular?

XXI

That Neighbor of Mine



THE first question to ask of anything we want to do is, Is it right? We want to know first of all if a thing is innocent in itself—if there is any sin or harm in it. If in answer to this question our consciences tell us that it is wrong, then there is no other question to ask. If a thing is wrong it is wrong, and there are no circumstances whatever that will justify us in doing it.

But if our consciences tell us that there is no sin in it, is there no other question to ask? Some honest people think not. They think the highest question a man can ask

of a thing he wants to do—especially if he is very anxious to do it—is, Is it right? “I have decided that there is no harm in this thing,” says one, “and that settles it. If it does not hurt me that is all I want to know. I cannot take up the question of the possible effect it may have upon others; it is as much as a man can do to look after himself. Every tub must stand on its own bottom. My golden rule is to mind my own business and let other people’s alone.” But there is another question and it is far higher than the first. If I am a selfish man and my conscience tells me that this thing which I want to do is innocent in itself, that will be enough; but if I am a Christian—if I have the spirit of Christ in me—I will not be satisfied; I will want to go further and ask, Can I do this thing without becoming a stumbling block to others? I can do it without harm to myself, but can those who are influenced by my conduct do it without harm? If I can not answer this question satisfactorily, the fact that the thing is innocent in itself will have

no weight with me—that is, if I have the spirit of Christ in me. I will not do that which will bring harm to others, however harmless it may be to me.

It is one thing to avoid danger to one's self; it is another thing to be concerned for the safety of others. Almost any sort of a man will ask whether a thing is right; it takes a Christian to inquire what effect his conduct may have upon his neighbor.

You know that you can climb yonder mountain path, and though it is perilous if you were with another good climber you would not hesitate to make the venture; but you have a small, venturesome boy with you who insists on doing as he sees you do, and therefore instead of climbing that path just to show him how smart you are, you will take the other road that leads around the mountain, because you would not endanger that boy's life. This is what our Lord asks of us—that we should refrain from taking those paths which, though safe to us, may be perilous to others.

What you and I need to learn is that

there are two directions in which we ought to look before deciding whether to do the thing we want to do. The first is toward God and the second is toward our neighbor. First, is this thing right? Is it harmless in itself? Can I do it without sin? If we are not satisfied that it is right then we must not go further; but if our consciences are clear on this point then we must go further. We must ask the second question: Will it do my neighbor any harm?

XXIII

Prebailing Prayer



IN the city in which I live are many rare and beautiful things in museums and libraries which I have never seen though they are open to me every day. It is not because I have no taste for these things—I have been wanting to go and see them and have been intending to for years, but I have always put it off to-day because I knew I could go to-morrow. And to-morrow, as we learn by and by, never comes. If I were only a visitor and expected to go home to-morrow I would see these things to-day. I wonder if this is why you and I so often neglect to enter into the secret

place of God. We are not indifferent. We do not dislike to pray, but there are always other things that we can do now and we know that we can seek his presence later on. And so we are continually postponing the enjoyment of our most precious privileges. Will we ever learn that procrastination is not only the thief of time but also the thief of almost everything else that is precious? Shall we allow everything that is good to be stolen from us?

Sometimes this neglect is due to our difficulty in believing that God cares to have us come to him. There is one assurance in our Bible which ought to settle this question in our minds forever, and that is that the prayers of grateful hearts rise as sweet incense to God. It was God, not man, who first thought of the prayers of men as incense, and instituted the burning of incense in his sanctuary to represent them. But why should it be hard to believe that God loves to hear us pray? Are not the petitions and entreaties of those who love us and whom we love very sweet

to us? Would a father be happy whose children never asked anything of him?

Some of us are always saying that we would pray oftener if we only knew how to pray. Yet our Lord has given us more explicit directions about praying than about any other duty. In the first place he has given us a model prayer to go by. Perhaps the most remarkable fact about the Lord's prayer is that it entirely reverses the usual order. Where Christ is not known a man goes to God thinking only of his own wants and will. It never occurs to him that God has any interests and that as a child of God he should think of God's interests, too. But, according to the model prayer which Jesus has given us a man, whatever his needs, should go to God concerned most of all for God's glory. The fact is, we are not in a condition to talk with God about our personal needs until we realize that we are a part of his kingdom and can ask him not so much to help us as to help his own.

When we realize this and come to speak

of our personal needs we will be content to ask him to supply our immediate wants. As for our future wants, we need not be concerned about them, for the reason that we have constant access to him, and we know that he will not change, and that his storehouse will not fail; and besides, we will want to go to him every day anyhow. And we will ask him to supply our needs—not to satisfy our desires, seeing that what we desire is very apt to be what we do not need. We will ask for bread, and we will not insist on its being buttered. If we are thinking of our own interests and not of his, we will be more likely to ask for cigars than bread, and we will be sure to insist on his giving us that portion which belongeth to us in a lump. Then we will go off and play the prodigal and never come back until we have come to husks.

You have noticed that when God fed Israel in the wilderness he gave them bread, not cake; necessities and not luxuries. It was not his purpose to indulge them. He

had undertaken to carry them across the desert, and he would provide the means. He would not pamper them; he would give them what they needed. One reason why there is so little of the spirit of praise and gratitude in our hearts is that we look to God for cake rather than bread. We want the sweetmeats of life. We go to him with our selfish wishes, asking not for the things that we need, but for the things we want; and because we do not get these things we are not grateful for the plain bread that comes to us. Many of us are like peevish children who dash the bread from the mother's hand because it is not cake, or because it is not sugar-coated. Is it any wonder that we are always saying that so many of our prayers are not answered? God is concerned about our little needs, but it is a mistake to think of him as an indulgent father who is willing to spoil us by giving us the things that are hurtful simply because he would not deny us. He wants us to be happy to-day, but he is planning for our happiness in the future;

and he is not going to provide for to-day's pleasure at the expense of future happiness. It may be well to ask him to deliver us from a present headache or heartache, or to provide enough money to-day to meet to-morrow's note in order that we may not worry ourselves over it; but after all, is it not time for us to be men, and if God does not choose to remove the headache can't we bear it like men and not fret and fume around him? And when we go to him to provide for to-morrow's note to-day so that we may be free from worry to-day, is it any better than a child saying to his mother, "Tell me I can go to the picnic to-morrow or I will cry all day?" We can trust God to care for us as babes so long as we are babes, to temper the wind to the shorn lamb so long as we are shorn lambs; but if you and I have developed in grace, and have grown strong to bear, and endure for his sake, should we be forever crying to God to save us from every little pain, every little annoyance, every little thing that makes us worry? Have we come thus

far and not found the grace of God sufficient to overcome worry?

But Jesus has not only given us a pattern prayer to go by; he has told us the spirit in which we must pray. For one thing we must be tremendously in earnest—importunate is the word. Importunity not only indicates earnestness, it begets earnestness. Our desires rise as we persevere in asking. The more persistent we are in asking, the more eager we become for the door to be opened. And persistence has its reward. If an unjust judge can be worried into answering the prayer of a poor widow, how much more will a just God who loves to answer prayer, come to the help of his own in their time of need.

Again, we must be humble. Here comes a proud Pharisee strutting up to the temple to pray to God—or rather, as the story goes, “with himself.” It would be difficult to imagine a Pharisee really praying, he could only plume himself, only pat his fullness to add to his comfort. Having reached the inner court, he turns round,

and having won the attention of the multitude strikes an attitude and enters upon his pious performance. "God, I thank thee," he says. He says it but he does not mean it; he means to thank himself. The Pharisee always regards himself as a self-made man—the self-made man who is proud of his maker. "I thank thee," he says, "that I am not as other men are." We who stand around and look on and listen must laugh; and yet is it not with some such spirit—is it not with just a little of this spirit that we often go to God in prayer? Do we not say to ourselves confidentially by way of encouraging the belief that God will hear us that we are not like other folks? Is there not a little feeling of superiority lurking somewhere, and the hope that our superiority will secure an answer? Do we not feel that God ought to bless us because we are Christians of enlightened America and not black heathen of darkest Africa?

"I am not as other men are," said the Pharisee, and then he goes on to name the

men he is not like: "Extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." Alas! in looking about him for the men he is not like he sees no proud men, no selfish, avaricious men, no hot-tempered men, no bitter, malicious spirits. He sees only the sort he wants to see. But are we wholly guiltless in this matter? Do we not see the things we want to see, and do we not try to hide our eyes from the truths we do not want to see?

And then he proceeds to spread out his virtues before the Lord—or rather before the assembled public, for it is his custom to pray aloud. "I fast twice in the week," he says with a flourish. He would have it understood by God and man that he fasts a hundred and three times more than the law requires. "I give tithes of all I acquire." The law requires tithes of corn, wine, oil, and cattle; he would have it understood that he exceeds the demands of the law; he gives tithes of everything, even to the trifling mint and anise and cummin.

But standing over here in the court of

the heathen is a poor fellow in disgrace. And here, far away from the holy place this despised tax-gatherer offers his prayer to God. He has no pious garb to show off. He does not feel like striking an attitude—the load on his heart is too heavy. He cannot thank God that he is not like other men; he feels that he is the chief of sinners. He does not try to display any virtues; he would not flaunt his filthy rags in the face of heaven. He has no claims to make; he has done nothing to bring God under obligation to him. He simply stands before God a poor, condemned sinner, conscious of his condition, and out of a broken heart, pleads for mercy without so much as lifting his head.

Looking upon this picture need we ask if it is worth while to go to God at all unless we can carry him an humble spirit?

But above all when we pray we must pray trusting in God in the present tense. Here perhaps is our chief difficulty. It was the difficulty with the Israelites. They found it easy to trust God for the future.

In some way or other in the dim distant future the Lord would provide. They could believe that. But when the future came to be the present their faith failed them. They could not trust God to deliver them from immediate starvation. They could trust him to overcome obstacles that were in the distance and out of sight, but they could not trust him to overcome obstacles that loomed up directly before them. They could not trust God in the present tense. And yet that is the only faith that is worth anything to us. The test of our confidence in God is the way we behave in the presence of immediately impending needs.

Many of us have a way of making our religion a matter of the future—of the hour of death for instance, when we cannot do without it. We are trusting God to save us by and by, to carry us across the dark river, and to give us heaven at last. It is no difficult matter to trust him for these things when we have no idea of dying for a score of years to come, but the test of our

faith lies in our ability to calmly trust him in the face of a present reality. Can we look to him to help us, not to-morrow or next year, but this very moment? It is a little matter to say that God will provide a way through the sea and through the wilderness; but can we look to him to divide the sea when our feet are already wet with the spray? Can we trust him to send bread when the last morsel that we brought out of Egypt has disappeared?

In other words can we pray for immediate results? All the old prophets who had power with God prayed for immediate results. Nowadays we are told to pray as an exercise and to be satisfied if the exercise develops our spiritual strength whether there are any direct results or not. But when Samuel prayed for rain he did not pray for exercise but for rain. Prayer is indeed a good exercise, but we are not told to knock in order to strengthen our muscles, but in order that the door may be opened. Jesus encourages us to pray, not as a pious exercise, but for results. If we

ask, not to be asking, but to receive, we shall receive; if we seek, not because we think we ought to, but to find, we shall find; if we knock, not as a pious exercise, feeling that while the door may not open the knocking will do us good, but believing that the door will be opened, it will be opened. And we shall not only receive, but we shall receive that which is good. He does not say we shall receive precisely what we ask for, but he reminds us that we ask of a Father, and we know that we who are fathers would not give our children a stone if they asked bread, nor a serpent if they asked for fish, nor a scorpion if they asked an egg. If we are sure that we, blind as we oftentimes are to the best interests of our children, will give them only that which is good, shall we have a doubt that our Father will give us that which is best—that he will even give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?

The Measure of Liberality



IVING to the Lord is something more than honoring the collection-plate. It is something more than handing over one's money to a good cause. A man may turn over to his church a million dollars a year and never give to the Lord a penny. Giving is a matter of the heart as well as of the pocket. The penny you toss to the beggar is not a gift: it is only the amount you pay to get rid of him or to bring peace to a disturbed conscience. Many a dime put into the collection-plate is only a cheap bid for respectability.

Your typical modern Cain is not a mur-

derer. He is the man who goes to God with an unacceptable offering. He is the man who has made his money dishonestly, and who instead of repenting of his sins and going to God with his sin-offering, goes with a thank-offering in the shape of a large bill for the collection-plate, or an endowment for some Christian college. It is so much easier to consume one per cent. of one's dishonest earnings burning incense to heaven in the sight of men, than to make restitution of one's ill-gotten gains to those one has wronged.

The measure of a gift is not the money that is in it, but the love that goes with it. If no love goes with it, there is no gift though it involve a million dollars: if love goes with it, it is a gift though it cost but a penny.

We easily recognize this truth in everyday life. We know full well that a gift to a friend to be a gift must be accompanied by the heart—that it is the heart that goes with it that makes it a gift. We are never concerned about the value of

anything that comes to us from another until we are assured that it is accompanied by the love of the sender and that it is not a bid for a present in return; and we know perfectly well that, however valuable it may be, if it is sent to us grudgingly or of necessity we can never regard it as a gift. Why can we not use the same commonsense in our dealings with God that we use in our dealings with our fellow-men? We ask a great many questions about the Christian duty of giving. We have placed it among the perplexing problems of life. Has it never occurred to us that we never ask questions about the duty of giving when we have in mind a gift to a father or a friend? There is no mystery about that matter. If we would only think of God as our father, or as our friend, our commonsense would tell us very quickly whether our gifts to him are what they ought to be or not. We know very well that we would not try to palm off a sick sheep or a lame bullock on a friend. We know just as well that if we desired to ex-

press our friendship by a gift, we would not make the round of all the bargain stores in town to see how cheap and shoddy a thing we could find; we would not give to a friend a brass ring and call it a gold one.

Whatever may be our profession, however zealous we may appear in the worship of God, however liberal we may be reputed to be, if we deliberately withhold from God his due, if we try to reduce the cost of our religion, if we try to make it appear to men that we are doing more for God than we are doing, our religion is hollow; our worship is an insult to the Almighty. There is no heart in it; there is only the sin of Ananias and Sapphira in it.

You and I love a cheerful giver; a liberal giver; one who puts his heart in what he gives; one who never sends anything to a friend, if it be but a flower or a note, that he does not send his love with it. So does God.

Making the Most of the Sabbath



ABBATH desecration is so common that we have almost lost consciousness of it, as one dwelling by the sea loses consciousness of its roar. Besides, we are prone to think of the Sabbath as having no other reason for its existence than the arbitrary command of God; and there is too much human obstinacy in us to feel very deeply the sin of disobeying a command for which we see no adequate reason. Yet, as a matter of fact, when we come to think of it, no other commandment appeals more strongly to our judgment. The Sabbath is not an arbitrary arrangement at all: it has its reason to be in the necessities of

our nature. The Sabbath was made for man because God foresaw that man would need it.

Our bodies need it. We have heard this so often that we have ceased to take it seriously. But it is not a matter of opinion which may be accepted or slighted, it is a matter of fact and a fact must always be taken seriously. One has only to look at those races which have no Sabbath. A man can accomplish more if he will rest one day in the week than he can accomplish by working seven days in the week. The industrial history of mankind is one vast pile of testimony in behalf of the Sabbath. And the brain needs it even more than the muscle. The intellectual history of mankind is one vast pile of testimony in behalf of the Sabbath.

Above all, our souls need it. The tendency of the man who is at work in the midst of the world is downward, not upward. If left to himself he becomes more and more engrossed in the things of earth, and more and more partakes of the nature

of the earth. It is only a question of time when he will bury himself in the earth. Or, to change the figure, we are like children playing in the surf. It is not our disposition to go ashore. We want to go out among the breakers. Left to ourselves we will wander outward, not inward. God saw this disposition in us and he provided the Sabbath, as a father sometimes ties a rope about the waist of his little boy playing in the surf. The little fellow wanders out the full length of the rope and presently is brought up with a jerk. He realizes where he is. He remembers his father at the other end of the rope. He turns back to his father. So God has provided the Sabbath as a rope to bring us up at the end of the week—with a jerk that will bring us to our senses; that will cause us to look around and see where we are and how far we have wandered, and how far we are from the Father's hand. But for thy Sabbaths, O God, how soon would we forget thee!

Again, it is just as important to have a

day set apart for the formal worship of God as it is to have stated hours of each day to say one's prayers. We are disposed to make little of forms and times and seasons; but we know full well that when a man gives up his stated hours for prayer because, as he says, he intends to pray without ceasing, it is only a question of time and a very short time when he will cease to pray altogether. Our devotions at the morning and evening hours may often be mere forms, but the tendency of these hours is to keep alive the spirit of prayer. We set apart an hour for prayer, not that we may give that one hour to prayer and the rest of our time to other things, but that we may make all of our hours prayerful. So God has set apart the Sabbath for his worship, not that we may worship God one day in the week, but that the ever-recurring sacred day may help to keep alive the spirit of worship so that we will worship God seven days in the week.

He that breaks the Sabbath sins against God by disregarding his expressed will;

sins against society which he thereby helps to demoralize; sins against his body and mind which need the rest from toil which the Sabbath gives; sins against his soul which needs the Sabbath for its development.

But there is a way to keep the Sabbath and a way not to keep it. For centuries before Jesus came the observance of the Sabbath had been a chief part of the Jew's religion. He had stood by it through thick and thin. He had not hesitated to shed his blood for it. Now that through rabbinical refinements it had become grievous to be borne it was still as dear as life to him. To perfectly observe the law of the Sabbath was to mount to the top round of the ladder where one could sit and bask in the sunshine of Heaven and be proud forever. Having become ambitious to fulfill the law with an eye to reward, both from God and men, the Jew had naturally lost sight of its design, and had learned to think of it as a purely arbitrary command. It was to him just what an edict of society

is to a society woman. The society woman does not stop to learn what is intended to be accomplished by the edict; it is enough for her to know that the woman who comes nearest to a literal fulfillment of society's edicts reaches the top where the cream is supposed to be. But in her attempt to reach the top she has often violated the spirit of the edict; and thus it has happened that many laws which were put forth by society with really good intentions, have become mill stones about the necks of its devotees. So, in the effort to reach the top round of the ladder by a literal fulfillment of the law, the Jew, having no thought of the design of the law, violated its spirit until it became a burden instead of a help.

When Jesus came he laid down a great test principle by the side of the rabbinical additions to the law. That test principle read, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." The principle called for mercy but the rabbinical additions called for sacrifices and

not mercy. Indeed they were themselves unmerciful. And because they neither moved to mercy nor showed mercy themselves he condemned them. "It is lawful—it is right and proper—to do well on the Sabbath day."

A religious form of observance is intended to help men, not to hurt them. That is a wrong keeping of the Sabbath that shuts up the door of mercy, or any door through which we may send or receive that which is good. For the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

And after all, the highest law of the Sabbath is not the command to abstain from work, but the command to keep the Sabbath holy. If, in the effort to keep the Sabbath holy one must work, as the priests did in the temple, and as the preacher must do in the pulpit, there is no sin, for the higher law eclipses the lower. The law calls for cessation from labor in order that one may have opportunity to look after his highest interests. Cessation from work alone is not obedience to the law, for we

know that an idle brain is the devil's workshop. But while deeds of mercy find a favoring atmosphere on the Sabbath day we should not allow even these to crowd out the quiet hour which the soul needs to look into its own affairs.

Am I in doubt as to whether I ought to do a certain thing on the Sabbath day? The test principle is before me: let me apply that. Is it an act of mercy? Very well: God wants mercy—wants to see me merciful, wants to see me doing merciful deeds—whether it is Sunday or Monday.

But let us remember that the distinctive spirit of the Sabbath is the spirit of worship. If there is no worship there is no Sabbath. If one loves to worship one will love the Sabbath. If one does not love to worship he will not love the Sabbath.

There comes before my mind's eye as I write these words the vision of a form long bent with the bearing of many burdens. The dear face is chiselled deep with pain and midnight watching. She is a woman of sorrows and acquainted with grief. You

wonder as you look at her if she ever has a moment's pleasure; and presently you venture to ask her. Instantly the worn face lights up.

"Why, certainly," she answers. "I am happy every day. No one can enjoy anything more than I enjoy my hours of worship. I am so glad when I can drop everything and spend a few moments alone with my Lord. And I am so glad when Sunday comes and I can go to worship with God's people. It is such a joy to me to go to church, for I love God's kingdom more than I can tell."

One does not hear words like these often, but one hears them. There is another tune of a more familiar turn.

"I am always sorry"—the name of this speaker is Legion—"when Sunday comes, and I have to go to church. I never yet found any pleasure in it. The whole thing is a bore. I don't see much in the church anyway: seems to me there's nothing but discord and injustice and—well I confess I never think of praying for its peace. As

for private prayer, I would not like for everybody to know it, but I don't enjoy that either. I never could see where the profit comes in."

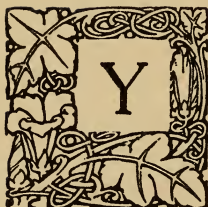
What is the secret of the difference between these two voices? The answer is easy. One finds joy in her devotions because she is devoted; the other gets nothing out of his devotions because he is not devoted.

He that would have heartfelt pleasure in the Sabbath must find pleasure in the worship of God, and he that would find heartfelt pleasure in the worship of God must give his whole heart to God. The writer of the Psalms is full of joy because he is full of devotion. He is glad to go to the house of God because he loves God. His heart swells within him at the sight of Jerusalem because it is the place where he goes to testify to his love for God. His joy springs from his love. His religion is an affair of the heart.

Whatever we may define to be the secret of a happy life it is certain that there is no

happiness either on Sunday or Monday where there is no love. Do you want your life to be one unfailing stream of happiness? Then see that the fountain at the head of the stream is filled with love. You may have sorrow and trials above measure, but you will know joy. Would you find your religion a delight? Look to your love for God. With increase of love will come increase of joy.

If You are Truly Sorry



YOU disobeyed God yesterday. Whatever the circumstances — whether you did it in heat or in cold—you cut clear across the grain of God's will and broke his commandments. And to-day, though the sun is shining as brightly upon the tree-tops as ever, there is no sunshine in your heart, and you are standing on the verge of despair as a man with a mill-stone about his neck. What punishment is there too great for one who has done so ignobly? What hope can there be for one who has done despite to the grace of God? Listen: "You have done wrong," says Samuel to

Israel; "it is indeed a grievous sin which you have committed; but if you will repent, if you will turn unto the Lord and from this moment obey his voice in all things, all shall be well with you."

And Samuel was speaking to a people who had solemnly promised to have only God for their king, and who had deliberately turned their backs upon him and demanded another king in his stead. Perhaps that is the very sin you committed yesterday. Certainly, you did nothing worse. Perhaps you turned away from God, and instead of being ruled by him allowed yourself to be ruled by selfishness, or greed, or sinful appetite. It was a terrible thing to do—there is no doubt about that—there is no glossing it; nevertheless, if you are really sorry for this sin you have committed, if you are really grieved that you should have thus treated Him who has done so much for you, if to-day you would rather cut off your right hand than do such a thing again, if your heart is broken over it, if you are striving from this mo-

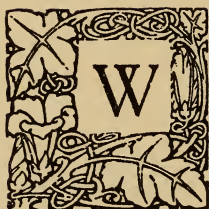
ment to obey God with all your heart and never forsake him again—then you may put away your tears and fears and look up with the assurance that God is not frowning upon you, but that he is standing waiting to forgive and to take your hand again and lead you in his own way. The one question for the contrite heart is not, "How great was the sin of yesterday?" but "How great is the repentance of to-day?"—not whether the sin of yesterday was more seeming than real, but whether the repentance of to-day is more seeming than real. If I am sure about my repentance it matters not about the greatness of my sin, for the greatest sin is not so great as our Savior from sin. If I am sorry, not because my sin has made me miserable, nor simply because I have brought myself into condemnation, but because I have grieved Him who died for me—if I am sorry enough to cease grieving him who died for me then all shall be well.

This is the teaching of the Book from beginning to end. To doubt it is to turn

away from one's Bible, one's anchor, one's hope and to plunge into the gulf of despair; to accept it is to turn away from one's sins and plunge into the stream of salvation.

XXVII

The Sin of Thoughtlessness



H E N thoughtlessness makes us ungrateful it is a vice; when it makes us cruel it is a crime; when it soothes us off to slumber unprepared for the final awakening, it is a—but there is no word to express it.

The world is very easy with the thoughtless. "Oh! he didn't mean anything; he was just thoughtless." "He isn't cruel; he just didn't think." "He is not ungrateful; he simply does not stop to reflect." We are always ready to excuse the sins of the thoughtless, provided they are not committed against ourselves. We don't want

an employee to be thoughtless—that is too exasperating. The first offence is annoying; the second is inexcusable. And we are indignant as to the thoughtlessness of those for whom we have done a favor. We insist that it is their business to think. It is a very ugly sin when it hurts our business or destroys our comfort, but it is a very small matter to our minds when it is a sin against God. “Oh! boys will be boys,” we say, and we readily excuse their sowing of wild oats, when, if they had sown their wild oats on our own land, we would have said something altogether different. We excuse a young girl’s wildness on the ground that it is the nature of a girl to be giddy, and we excuse our own forgetfulness of God on the ground that we have so many things to think of. And yet when we come to think of it, this very thing which we are so ready to excuse in ourselves is at the bottom of many of our troubles, perhaps, and most of our failures. It is thoughtlessness more than anything else that imperils our future.

Those five foolish maidens of whom Jesus tells us did not mean to do anything wrong; they were not lacking in their respect for the bridegroom; they simply did not think. The other five were ready because they thought. It is easy to say that we do no harm, that we have the deepest reverence for God and for his law and all that; but the question is, are we ready? Have we been thoughtful enough to provide for his coming? We may excuse our lack of preparation on the ground that we do not know what our Lord's coming means, but we certainly know that practically our Lord does come to everyone at the moment of death, and we cannot avoid the question, Are we ready for that moment? Are we watching for his coming? Not watching idly; not watching by placing our finger on our pulse now and then and counting its life beats; not watching by counting the days as they pass; but watching by being ready. Watchfulness is a state of preparedness. The five wise maidens were prepared for the bridegroom's com-

ing, and it was not a very serious matter if they should grow drowsy while waiting. The five foolish ones were not prepared and to sleep was suicide. If we have that in our hearts which makes us ready for his coming—if we have that in us which will not make his coming like the cry of fire at midnight—if we are trusting him as our Savior—if we have given our lives into his keeping—if we have laid our all upon his altar—if we are his children—then we can go forth to the day's labor in safety, because we abide under the shadow of the Almighty; and we may lay ourselves down in peace and sleep; "for thou Lord only makest me to dwell in safety."

XXVIII

At the Approach of Danger



THE very first thing to do when danger approaches is to go straight to our Protector. If we fail to do this it will be because we have not learned to think of God as our refuge. When we go to him we may ask him to avert the storm, but we must not insist upon it; as his children we may only claim protection, and he may choose to let the storm come and to protect us in it. If we thus go to God, throwing ourselves upon him as our preserver, we will not tempt his providence by sitting down and waiting for the danger to come without doing what we can to

prepare to meet it. And if we have thrown ourselves upon him we will not feel like dropping our daily duties and thus neglecting the work he has given us to do. "When I see a danger approaching," says one, "I am all in a flutter, and I just can't go on with my work until it has passed." The trouble with this poor flutterer is that he has not planted his feet on the rock. When the danger appears in the distance he does not fly to God; he simply spreads his wings and—flutters. If a man opens his house to save you from a pursuing enemy you will feel like rendering him a service. You will feel all the better if he will give you something to do. So when we go to God for protection in time of danger we will not want to sit down and idle away the time until the storm is past; we will want to keep busy doing the work he has given us to do. For when a man is working for God he knows that he is under the protection of God. The "shadow of the Almighty" extends all along the path of duty, and we

have no assurance that it extends beyond it.

Sitting down to wait for an impending danger of any sort is the poorest possible preparation for meeting it; for while we are waiting we are neglecting our daily duties and losing the strength which God gives us for our daily duties. The battle is already lost to him who waits in idleness and disobedience for the coming of the enemy. Keep straight on in the path of duty and it will find you equipped for the fray, in full armor, in possession of well-exercised faculties, strong in a good conscience and in the strength which God supplies through his eternal Son.

A Word About Temptation



HE human heart has always been secretly disposed to hold God responsible for its own sins. If it be said that God created all things, our perverse natures at once ask if he did not create sin, and if it is answered that sin is not a thing, but an act of the mind or the heart or the body, we immediately ask if God did not make our minds, our hearts, and our bodies. Like Adam, we want to put the blame for our misconduct upon our Benefactor. But we are taught not only that God is not the author of evil, but that he is in no sense responsible for it, unless indeed we wish

to hold him responsible for making us men with wills of our own and the power to choose, rather than tin soldiers. God did not bring sin into the world. He gave us hearts endowed with power to open either to good or evil but he did not open our hearts to evil, and he did not prepare the evil and give it power to open our hearts. Evil was not inherent in the world. It was not the natural outcome of God's work of creation. It came from without; it came from an outlaw; it came from the enemy of God. By no sort of means can we in any way atone for our offenses by placing any blame upon God. As an evidence that the coming of sin into the world was not of his own doing, we have him meeting sin with a plan of redemption. The very moment evil enters the world God provides a way to deliver man from it. Satan is the author of evil. God is the author of redemption from evil.

"Could not God have man so that he could not have sinned?" He could have made something which might have been

called a man but it would not have been a man. For the very thing that differentiates man from the lower animals is his moral nature—that within him which discerns and chooses between good and evil. If he had been made so that he would have no choice between good and evil he would have had no moral nature at all—his goodness would have been merely the goodness of a machine that runs smoothly and does the work for which it was designed. Is there any virtue in a good thing that you do because you cannot help yourself? If a brigand saves a man's life in order to secure the man's treasure does he deserve any credit for not killing him?

But if we cannot blame God for our sins, neither can we excuse ourselves on the ground that Satan tempts us to sin. Satan does tempt us to do wrong, but he does not force us to do wrong. No monster roams up and down this world pouncing upon helpless men and women and forcing them to sin. Besides, God nowhere condemns us for being tempted; the sin is not

in being tempted but in yielding. We are not responsible for being tempted any more than we are responsible for a robber's breaking into our house; but we are responsible for a robber's entrance if he comes in through a door which we have left unlocked, and we are responsible for the entrance of the tempter if we leave the doors and windows of our minds wide open and unguarded. The man who unnecessarily enters a place of sin does wrong whether he comes out whole or not; he has no right to expose his soul to the darts of the destroyer. Jesus did not go into the wilderness to be tempted; he went because he was led by the Spirit. We may safely go where God leads us.

But, says one, "There was Daniel who lived amid all the corruption of an oriental court and yet kept himself unspotted from the world: why may I not do the same?" The answer is plain. The protecting arm of God, the shadow of the Almighty, covers the whole path of duty. If when walking in the path of duty we come to a place

of temptation we are still under God's protection. But if in following our own pleasure we deliberately choose a place of temptation we are not walking in the path of duty—we are not dwelling in "the secret place of the Most High"—and therefore we do not "abide under the shadow of the Almighty."

There are five little rules you must adopt if you want to overcome temptation. First, never of your own will put yourself in the way of the tempter. "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men." If you are in the path of duty God will keep you, but if you go aside you cannot look to him. Second, never look upon forbidden fruit. "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red." Third, never parley with the devil. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." Fourth, keep the fear of God before you. "Fear not them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." The fear of God keeps a man

out of sin; the fear of man keeps him in sin. Fifth, keep yourself well in hand. "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection."

There are some simple stories in the Bible which we have never found use for except to amuse our children, that teach us more about overcoming temptation than all the learned sermons we have ever read. Take for example the story of David and Goliath which to most of us is only a disagreeable tale of blood. Every David has his Goliath. More than once in a life-time we wake up on a cloudy morning to find that some giant temptation has challenged us to a fight. David killed his giant enemy; may we not learn from him how we can kill ours?

Here comes a worldly-wise-man who says: "I think I understand it. David was a shrewd fellow. He always knew what to do, and the very nick of time in which to do it. He knew, for instance, just when to catch the lion by the beard. It was the most natural thing in the world for a man

of David's shrewdness to stop at the brook, pick up a smooth stone, twirl it in his sling, and send it crashing through the giant's brain." There is a good deal in what Mr. Worldly-wise-man says. God intends us to use our common sense in fighting our temptations, and there is no better way than to dip down into the old Book, and pick up some smooth stone of a promise, and put it in the sling of faith, and let it fly against every temptation that comes in sight. But the divine side is uppermost in every conquest. David knew his chances and used them; but suppose he had missed his aim?

Three things helped David in this fight. In the first place, he called to mind his former deliverances. Goliath was a terrible looking monster, but not to be feared above the lion and bear out of whose paws God had delivered him. If God could deliver him from a lion and a bear, he could deliver him from a man who had defied the armies of the living God. We are very happy when God delivers us out of the

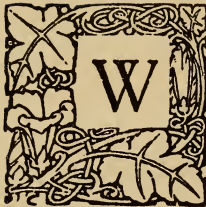
lion's paw, and we think we will never doubt him, and never get discouraged again; but the next lion we meet frightens the very thought of God out of our minds, and we are as weak as ever. The lion you meet to-day seems bigger than the lion you killed a year ago, simply because last year's lion is a dead lion, and far off at that. It strengthens us for the struggle to keep in mind our past deliverances. If God has helped us in the past, it is the best evidence in the world that he will help us again.

In the second place, David remembered that the battle was the Lord's. If it was God's battle, God's honor was at stake, and God would take care of that. If we are in God's ranks, then the battle is the Lord's. If we are out of his ranks, we are defenseless. If we are in his ranks, his arm is about us; and the man who feels the Arm about him is water-proof, fire-proof, bullet-proof against every power of darkness.

Finally, David realized the superiority

of spiritual equipment over all earthly armor. "Thou comest to me with a sword and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come unto thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, whose armies thou hast defied." The name of the Lord is the only omnipotent weapon against temptation. We bring to bear our sense of self-respect against a temptation only to find that the temptation is just a little stronger than our sense of self-respect. You say you do not do this because you are a church-member; but sometimes you will happen upon a temptation just a little stronger than your love for the church. You bring to bear your will-power, only to find that your temptation is too strong for that. There are temptations that will overcome everything but the name of the Lord of hosts. Before that name every giant goes down.

Helper of the Helpless



WHILE the world is showering its gifts upon the rich, showing courtesy to those who are overwhelmed with courtesies, sending Sunday dinners to neighbors whose tables are already overburdened, offering the pleasure of their company to people whose parlors are always crowded, Jesus turns aside into an unfrequented path and seeks out the forsaken and lonely to give them a lift. Men look upon the world going its way and upon Jesus going his way and decide that it is better to follow the world. But is it better? Is it better to waste a dollar upon one who does

not need it and will not appreciate it than to use it where every penny will count? Is there more pleasure in treating a rich man's son to ice-cream than there is in watching a pauper's child suck his first orange bought with your money? Will it make you happier to contribute a hundred thousand dollars to a millionaire college than to give a thousand dollars to educate the bright boy of a poor ambitious mother who is struggling at the washtub to send her son to school?

Here is a man who, for thirty-eight years, has been a helpless invalid. During this whole time he has been hoping to get well, doubtless, like other invalids. For some time his hopes have centered upon a spring which is popularly supposed to have miraculous curative properties. Day by day he has dragged himself painfully to the porch of the spring and waited for an opportunity to test its virtues. Day after day his heart has throbbed wildly with hope as he has struggled forward to reach the bubbling water, and has sunk within him again

as another has stepped down before him and shut him off. It has happened so many times that the poor fellow has almost given up. Still, with every morning comes new hope, and he drags his withered body back to the spring again. He is not only utterly helpless, but there is not one to help him. No friend will stay by him and wait for the bubbling of the water. Helpless and friendless he lies there in the porch waiting, hoping against hope.

Do you wonder that this man attracts the eye of Jesus as he passes by? No; you would wonder if anything else should attract him at that moment, for all that we have ever learned of Jesus has taught us that it is the one who needs him most, the most helpless case, that tugs hardest at his heart-strings. We can hardly conceive that he would notice anyone else at the pool first, unless there was someone else whose case was more urgent. If he would walk among us to-day all the world would know what to expect of him. All the world would know just where he would go, and

just what he would see, and just how he would employ his time. We know—we know absolutely—that the thing that is on his heart is to help the helpless—to help those who need him most—if they will let him help them. We know that he would not spend his time with those who did not need him, or who were not conscious of needing him, and who would not open their hearts that he might help them.

We know this and yet in our hour of extremity we wonder if Jesus is thinking of us, if he really cares, if he is planning a way of escape for us, if he ever intends to come to us. The whole story of his life is a story of the helper helping the helpless, and yet when we are most helpless we are most prone to doubt that he will come to our help. Oh, that to-day we might have a vision of Jesus as the Helper of the helpless! If we could only realize deep down in our hearts that our extremity is his opportunity—that he loves to help those who feel their need of him, and that he loves most to help those who feel their need of him most!

The All-Sufficient Friend



ESUS came down into the world because he was interested in its inhabitants. After he had done his task for us and gone back he came again in a vision to John on Patmos, simply because he was interested in us. He wanted John to write a letter to his churches because he had been thinking about his people and was deeply interested in them. Ever since then he has been coming to his people simply because he has been interested in us.

Who is it that is interested in us? In a time of great darkness there is comfort in knowing that anyone is interested in us.

There is consolation in the sympathy of a little child who can do nothing for us—who can only look up into our faces with helpless pity. But the vision of Patmos tells us that in our darkest hour the One who is most interested in us is no less a being than a king—nay, the King of Kings—our Lord himself. He is eternal. There is no danger that he will cease to be or that he will ever change in his feelings toward us. There is no danger that he will lose interest in our case before we have passed through this great shadow. He is the Unchanging One. He is the All-seeing One. There is no danger that he will fail to appreciate our circumstances. We need not fear that he does not know the depth of our sorrow or our perplexity. He knows our trouble better than we know it ourselves, and he can make no mistake as to the remedy. He is the Swift-footed One. Those feet that appear like burnished brass of dazzling brightness speak to us of eternal vigilance. Sometimes we think we have found a friend in need and to-morrow that

friend grows weary of well-doing and we see him no more. Jesus never wearies. Jesus never fails to come. What a wonderful picture is here of the all-sufficient Friend and Comforter. In him is everything we need. He lacks nothing. He is a perfect comforter. He is a perfect helper. And this perfect helper is with us—not eyeing us from afar off, not watching us to see if we are going to disobey him, not looking coldly upon us, not absenting himself now and then from us—but he is one with us; closer to us than our closest friend, closer to us than our own voice, closer to us than our inmost thoughts.

The Truth About God's Care



E that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." We have read this so often that it is difficult to grasp its wonderful meaning. Let us make no mistake. God protects his people. He does not coddle them, but he protects them. He may not shield us from every change of temperature, from the winter's sleet or the summer's heat, from headaches or the blues which our own imprudence has invited, but he protects us. That is to say, he protects us as men and women, not as babies or shorn lambs that must ever have the

March winds tempered for them. God has nowhere promised to shield us from the thousand-and-one petty annoyances of life from which we are always praying to be delivered, and without which we would have nothing, on the human side, to develop our strength, our courage, or our patience. God did not shield the children of Israel from the discomforts and trials of their night journey across the sandy bed of the sea, but he protected them. He stood between them and their enemies. He did not carry them to the promised land on flowery beds of ease; he made them walk every step of the way; but he protected them on the way. God put us here in the world that we might grow up hardy plants—fruit-bearing trees that are better for the cold and heat, and the March winds that whistle through their branches—not delicate hothouse plants that must be forever waited on, and for all one's waiting bring forth nothing but flowers.

We must get rid of the morbid, invalid ideas of providence which lurk in our

minds. Some of us think that if God loves us it would hurt him to see one of our fingers bleed. We are always going to him like babies and crying to him about our sleepless nights and our mosquito bites that have come to us by our own improvidence. We are always praying for the comfort of our bodies, as if the body was the chief thing. God is infinite in compassion and we may be sure he does not want to see any of his children suffer, but he is concerned about us rather than about our mere visible selves—our bodies which are the mere clothing of our inner selves. A father does not want to see his daughter's fine, new dress torn, but if it should catch fire he would not hesitate to tear it to shreds to save his daughter's life. So God does not want to see our bodies hurt, but he is willing that they should suffer anything and everything for the sake of our souls. And so while God may often protect our clothes, our property, our bodies—the external things which surround our real selves—he will not hesitate to let them

all go rather than that the real self, the soul, should suffer.

God not only shields his people, but he provides for them while he is shielding them. "Trust in the Lord and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." So the Psalmist found; so millions of God's children have found since the Psalmist's day. If a man will trust in the Lord—if he will cast all his care upon God, knowing that God careth for his own; if he will do good; if he will obey God—he shall dwell in the land, and verily he shall be fed. Let us be sure that we understand the promise as well as the conditions. We shall be fed. This does not mean that God is under obligations to feed us in the way or at such times as we want to be fed. It does not mean that he is going to gratify all our innocent appetites of body or mind. It does not mean that he will be considerate of our whims or crotchety notions. It does not mean that he will pamper us, or run to us every time we whine. It simply means that he will see to

it that so long as he has use for us here on earth we shall be provided for here on earth. It means that if we are doing God's will and casting our care upon him he will never fail to honor our faith. It means that he will provide for us in his own way and time even if he must perform a miracle to do it.

And let us be sure that we understand the conditions. We have not the slightest warrant for the hope that God will intervene for our protection or sustenance at all events and under all circumstances. We may as well understand that we have not the slightest claim upon him if we are not trusting in him. It is true that there is not a man beyond the loving care of God, for he sendeth his rain and his sunshine upon the unjust as well as upon the just. Many of the favors which he daily showers upon his obedient children fall upon every son of Adam. But no man can take this promise of God's peculiar protection to his heart who is not living a life of trust. Elijah committed his way unto the Lord.

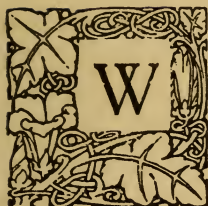
When God told him to leave his mountain home and go and stand before Ahab, he went. When God gave him a word to speak to Ahab he spoke that very word, regardless of consequences. When God directed him to go and hide himself from the angry king, he went without a word, though it was against the grain—Elijah's grain—to go. When he was told that ravens would be sent to feed him he believed it. He did not disturb his mind over the raven problem as some of us have done. When the last drop of water had disappeared from the brook he still waited for the word of the Lord. He was sent there by Jehovah and he would die there unless Jehovah told him to leave. It is not strange that such a man should be fed. It is not strange that God should perform a miracle to feed him. And if you and I trusted God as implicitly as Elijah did—if we allowed our steps to be guided absolutely by his word, the matter of bread would never give us any more anxiety than it gave Elijah.

But God not only shields his people; he delivers them. He not only protected the Israelites from their enemies, he delivered them out of the hands of their enemies. He does not always deliver after our own notion, but he always delivers. The servant who is imprisoned for his Lord's sake may be set free in body, or he may be set free from his body; but he will be set free. The deliverance of the three Hebrew "children" was not more real than the deliverance of many a Christian martyr, whose spirit was released by fire at the stake from the prison house of a tortured body surrounded by an atmosphere of sin.

It is here that our faith so sadly fails. We trust God to protect us but it is hard to trust him to deliver us. We can ask him with confidence to keep us from being overwhelmed by Satan, by our evil appetites, by our horrible tempers, but it is so hard to look to him to give us the victory over these things. We don't look for victory; we only hope to keep our heads

above water and struggle along after a fashion until God in his mercy comes to take us to heaven out of harm's way. But this is not God's plan. God does not want us to live at a dying rate. He wants us to conquer. He put us here in the world to subdue the world, not to be subdued by the world; and he wants us to triumph; he wants to deliver us out of the hands of our enemies; he wants to deliver us from the power of our evil appetites; he wants to deliver us from the horrible temper that has so often gained the victory over us. He sent his own Son into the world that we might be delivered from the world—that in all things we might be more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

The Cure for Despondency



E are born unto disappointments as the sparks fly upward. The greatest heights given to men to climb overlook the darkest depths of despondency, and the most successful climbers are liable to lose their footing at one time or another in life. And when the man who has climbed very high falls into the depths it is a long fall. There is no disappointment so severe as that which often follows a great achievement.

Yonder goes Elijah fleeing for his life. What has come over the spirit of this man? Until to-day he has never known

fear. Twice he has faced Ahab without a quiver of a muscle. He has faced starvation. He has stood out alone against all the prophets of Baal. Time and again he has stepped out upon the promises of God when it was as dark as midnight and he knew not where he was going. And yet to-day he is fleeing utterly panic-stricken at the threat of a woman. Evidently there is something the matter, for yesterday he could have faced a thousand Jezebels.

The truth is Elijah is discouraged. Yesterday he was on the mountain top; to-day he is in the depths. Yesterday he poured out his strength in a mighty effort for Jehovah; to-day he is as weak as a babe—weak not only because he expended so much vitality yesterday but because so little has come of his supreme effort. Evidently he had over-estimated the outcome of the day's work, just as you and I have often done. Apparently, too, he felt too much his own importance. He felt that everything rested upon him—that he was standing alone, the sole support of Je-

hovah's cause in Israel. A man cannot long feel that way without falling into the depths.

It was not because Jezebel was a greater terror than all the terrors he had ever faced before, but because his soul had been unhinged by discouragement that he became panic-stricken at this woman's threat. Discouragement after his supreme effort sapped the little strength of spirit that was left, and he had no courage for anything. Later, when he had spent his physical strength in a long flight across the country and dropped down beneath a juniper tree, he was so weak that he was almost dead and he could only wish that he was altogether dead. It was not a pious wish or a proper wish, but it was altogether a natural wish for such a moment. Happily he prayed to One who does not answer our prayers according to our own short-sightedness, but according to his wisdom. It was a foolish request and God treats the foolish requests of his children very much as the wisest and most patient among us

treat the foolish requests of our own children.

See the parental tenderness of God in this moment of Elijah's weakness. The world never allows a giant to show weakness. We lose all patience with the strong when they are weak. But God has no word of rebuke for Elijah lying there under the juniper tree wishing himself dead. He knows that his child is sick and he only goes about to make him well again. As we look upon this scene our hearts are stirred by the thought that God is showing the same loving care for Elijah, now that he is in the depths, as he showed for him in the days when he dared to face all the world for Jehovah's sake. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him"—pitieth them when they are strong, pitieth them when they are weak.

It is easy to see that God regards Elijah in the depths of despair as a man would regard his child at the bottom of a well. He must be brought out of the depths,

and he must be brought at once. He that is in the depths must get out of the depths, or he might as well get out of the world; for it is the one place where a man cannot be of any possible use either to God, or himself, or his neighbor.

Notice how the Great Physician goes to work to cure Elijah. First, there is the physical man that must be built up. God does not despise this body of ours as some pious folk affect to despise it. He is not so deeply concerned about the souls of men as to think nothing of their physical wants. There was a physical basis for Elijah's depression, and God had regard for it. First, he directed his servant to a quiet spot far from the haunts of men. Then he quietly put him to sleep. Then he gave him food. Then he put him to sleep again. In the man's conscious intervals he was made to realize from the presence of the angel that the loving care of God was still over him. Thus his body was rested, refreshed, strengthened; his mind was quieted, and his spirit soothed

and cheered. He is not yet cured, but he is well enough to go to school where he may learn the things which inspire hope. And this is the meaning of the journey to Horeb, the mount of God. He needs to start over again and learn the great truths which once made him a giant.

What would you and I do if we were left alone at Horeb—the very place where God in ancient times had shown himself to his people and delivered unto them his everlasting law? Sitting there alone in the stillness, overwhelmed with awe and with awful thoughts, how little we would become in our own eyes! How trifling would appear everything that we had ever done! And every day that you and I remained there God would appear greater and we would appear smaller, until all life would appear in its true perspective, and we would be filled with that consciousness of God which reaches to the very mountain-top of human privilege. It is for this that God leads Elijah to Horeb—that he might have this transforming reve-

lation of God—a revelation that would shed light on life's pathway, that would raise him out of the depths of despair and enable him to go on his way henceforth with a tranquil soul and a courageous heart.

This story suggests a prescription which every discouraged child of God is privileged to take. There is usually a physical basis for our despondency. It is our duty to look after that first. Then we need to go to school again. We should look for the power of God, for we never would have despaired if we had kept our eyes on the omnipotent One. It is the duty of every discouraged man to reassure himself that his God is omnipotent. Then he should go to his closet with his Bible and listen for the still small voice—the voice that will reprove and then direct and then encourage. And he should open his heart wide to every word. He should read God's word of reproof, and he should not stop there; he should search the Word for orders, and when he is sure of his orders

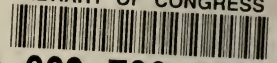
he should turn to the promises and encourage his heart with them.

It is God's prescription and it will not fail.

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